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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["YOU CRIED OVER MY MUSIC," SAID THE SPOILT CHILD, "WHEN I TOLD YOU MR. SINCLAIR WAS GOING AWAY."]

## DOLLY'S LEGACY.

—O—

### CHAPTER-IV.

DOLLY'S first feeling on learning that Viscount Devereux would be at Field Royal that evening was one of terror.

How she feared this man she could not tell. Too innocent and pure in heart to understand his baseness, she yet knew by instinct there was danger to her in intercourse with him. She not only disliked him, but was conscious of a terrible dread of his very presence, and she trembled with real alarm when she heard he was on his way to the quiet refuge where she had been so happy.

This was her first impression—keen terror; her second was even more painful. She had grown very fond of Lady Mabel. Dolly, who, in her chequered life had had very few to care for, had grown to love the little invalid as a sister. She loved Mabel better than anyone in the whole world, and—Mabel was a Devereux.

Her mother's dying words flashed upon her

mind. "Never trust a Devereux, they are false to the very core. You may not be able to help meeting them, but, at least, promise me this much, that you will never make a friend of a Devereux."

And she had promised with those dying eyes upon her, she had given her plighted word; and now, not three months after that death-bed pledge, she was living among the Devereuxs, had given all the love of her heart to a child who bore the name.

Dolly's first idea was that she must go away; that loyalty to her dead mother compelled her to leave Field Royal. But where could she go? What refuge would open to receive her? How could she confess to Mrs. Pemberton she had left the situation so generously afforded her for such a reason?

And as the girl thought of this one fact came bitterly home to her. Her mother must have known the Devereuxs. Her antipathy to the whole race, her wish to preserve her child from any contact with them did not arise solely from what Dolly had told her of the Viscount.

No, the words were, "They are all false,

false and cruel; trust none of them." It must have been a very bitter experience which had taught the dying woman such a language.

"Dolly, what is the matter?"

Lady Mab was the speaker. Long ago she had discarded the formal Miss Smith. She was a very intelligent child, almost precociously so for her years. She knew perfectly well that the change in her friend's face was caused by Mrs. Bond's news.

"The matter, Mab? Nothing."

"Nonsense!" said Mab, resolutely; "your face is quite white and scared. You look as if you had seen a ghost. Dolly, do tell me what it is?"

"I can't, dear."

"You must," imperiously said the little invalid. "You know you can't bear me to be unhappy. Well, I shall be quite wretched if you don't tell me what is the matter."

"I cannot, Mab."

There was such agony in the voice that for a moment Mab kept silence from sheer surprise, but it was only for a moment; then her dark eyes flashed triumphantly, and she exclaimed,—

"I have guessed it. You are sorry Devereux is coming home, so am I, Dolly. I hate him!"

She cried beyond measure. Dolly tried to assume the tone of governess and directress, and informed Lady Mab that it was very wicked to hate anyone, much more her own brother. The little lady held her ground defiantly.

"I hate him, Dolly. You don't know how cruel he is. He let his dog worry my pet cat, and laughed when I begged him to call it off."

Dolly kept silent. She could quite have imagined it.

"And what do you think he calls me?"

"Fairy," repeating the name Mab had told her Lord Desmond always used.

"Fairy!" indignantly, "as if I would let him call me that. No; he says I am a little hunchback."

The tears came into Dolly's eyes. She knew there was a fear her crippled state had distorted Mabel's figure, but as yet it was only a fear; and that anyone should be so brutal as to allude to it to the child herself in that barbarous fashion filled her with indignation.

"It is quite true," said Mab. "Once my mother and he were talking. She begged him to be careful, because papa could not afford to give him any more money with so many daughters to portion. 'The little hunchback will never want a dowry,' Devereux said; 'I may as well have her share.' Dolly, I have hated him ever since."

Mab was old beyond her years. Dolly thought she might venture on a half-confidence.

"Do you know I never guessed until to-night that your name was Devereux?"

"Then you don't know Jack was my brother?"

"No," said Mab, quietly, "you know Jack and you don't like him, so you are sorry he is coming here?"

"I think you are a witch, Mabel."

"No, I'm not. Dolly was very unkind to you?"

Dolly kept silent.

"I should have thought he would have been good to you," said the child, with a graceful stress on the pronoun, "he likes pretty people so much."

"Shall you see much of him, Mabel?"

Lady Mab looked round the schoolroom—it was her own special domain. Beyond was her bedroom, opposite were Dolly's rooms. All these four were in the west wing, and separated from the rest of the house by the picture gallery and numerous passages. The young ladies had generally taken their meals downstairs. The change was thought good for Mabel, but the child soon saw she had only to speak to the housekeeper to have this altered.

"Bond," she said, imperiously, when her repeated messages had brought up the old woman, in spite of the bustle, "you are going to do me a favour."

"Oh! Lady Mabel," cried the poor overburdened housekeeper, "don't get any of your fancies to-night; I'm bothered pretty well to death."

"It won't give you any trouble."

"What is it, deary? do be quick. Your brother will be here in half-an-hour."

"I want you to order all the servants not to tell Devereux I am here."

"But—"

"I shall worry myself ill if he comes bothering. Just order the servants not to say a word about my being at home, and Miss Smith and I will take all our meals in the schoolroom till the house is free again; and, Bond, you must come and have a talk with us every morning just to tell us the news."

Bond promised. It is my belief she would have promised anything just to get back to her work.

"It's a strange whim not to want to see her own brother," thought the good woman, as she went away; "but, poor child, she's enough to bear without being crossed, and perhaps it's just as well. Miss Smith is very pretty, and

the Viscount is not so steady as he might be, though, of course, things may be changed since his engagement."

So when Lord Devereux and his friends arrived not a word was said about the west wing and its inmates.

The dinner, served in faultless style, was a great success, and Viscount Devereux, who, to do him justice, had sometimes very winning manners, congratulated Mrs. Bond with ready courtesy, adding—

"But I should think it was a comfort to you to see anyone here, Bond—the place must have been like a prison since my mother left."

"We have missed the Countess and the young ladies very much, my lord."

"It was very strange to take them all."

"They have not all gone, my lord. Lady Bertha and Lady Maude are at school."

That makes three daughters to drag about Paris, without counting Mabel. I wonder they didn't leave her at home!"

Mrs. Bond was conveniently deaf.

And now, the morning after his arrival, while the others still slumbered, Herbert Sinclair idled by the banks of the Way, and dreamed of the picture that was to make his name famous.

At this time our hero was not far from thirty years of age. He had a grave, thoughtful face, soft, expressive brown eyes, which had a liquid tenderness in their depths, but his mouth was stern, and almost a little hard; faultless as were his clearly cut features, their general characteristic was firmness, his expression told of great resolution, and the lines about his mouth hinted at some heavy, secret sorrow.

"Nonsense!" Viscount Devereux exclaimed, when his mother asked him if his friend had any heavy disappointment that he looked so sad, "Sinclair is grave and that by nature. Disappointment, indeed! Why, Lord Bertha is one of the richest noblemen in England, and Herbert's his only son. Besides his good fortune, independent of his father, lots of his relations have died and left him money. Disappointment, indeed! No girl would say 'No' to Sinclair if only she was lucky enough to please him!"

The Countess devoutly wished one of her own daughters might be "ready enough to please him." To this end she urged Devereux to cultivate his acquaintance assiduously, and herself paid marked attention to Lady Bertha, but up to the present time no results had followed. She could not flatter herself that her girls had made the slightest impression upon the artist's stony heart.

The other mother would gladly have wished the Countess and her daughters success, since the one desire of her heart was that her boy should find a wife.

"Herbert," she said to him the very day on which he started for Field Royal, "will you never think of marriage?"

He seemed to be busy with his gun! he never looked towards his mother as he answered, wearily,—

"I wish you'd get over that grievance, old lady."

"I can't help it, Bertie; you are the last of our name. It will break your father's heart if you do not transmit it to your children."

"Hearts don't break so easy, mother."

"You are nearly thirty."

"What of that?"

The Baroness grew desperate.

"My dear, have you any secret attachment? Is there any young lady you would make Mrs. Sinclair but for difficulties of birth and station? My boy, your father and I would welcome any wife you brought home, so that she was good and true, even if her parents were poor, and she never had a grandfather."

"I see. You suspect me of a romantic attachment to a charming sweep's daughter, but you are mistaken, mother."

"Bertie, is there no one? Will you never think of marrying and settling down?"

Mr. Sinclair dropped his mocking tone; he went up to Lady Brereton, laid one hand upon

her shoulder, and looked into her eyes with a strange, regretful tenderness in his own.

"Mother, at present I can not marry. Do not ask me for explanation; I have none to give. There is not a woman in England for whom my heart beats quicker. You must rest satisfied with that."

And now the man who had declared himself heart-whole stood by the banks of the silvery Wey, and wondered whether the beautiful vision before him were mortal and some strange creature of his imagination.

He did feel doubtful for a moment. Remember he was in private grounds, the guest of a family who had confessed the spot to be haunted. Moreover, all the ladies of the family were known to him, and he knew for a fact that nothing feminine had been left at Field Royal but servants. Face to face they stood, a crimson flush dyed the girl's cheek and solved Herbert's doubts.

"I beg your pardon," he said, and a princess could not have taken offence at his apology and its manner; "I beg your pardon. I was lost in a reverie when I heard you singing, and I thought—"

He stopped abruptly, she did not help him. After a pause he added, slowly,—

"I thought for a moment that I was the victim of a dream."

Dolly's own feeling at the rencontre was annoyance, for now Viscount Devereux might hear of the west wing's secret. She gave one look at the stranger and felt he was to be trusted. Dolly would not willingly have remained a second alone with Viscount Devereux, she was with his friend she had no fear.

"I suppose you are staying at Field Royal?" she said, simply. "I know visitors were expected last night."

Herbert was consumed with a desire to learn who she was; perhaps if he could only engage her in conversation the secret would transpire.

"No," he answered, "I only came down last night, and I was so much with the beauty of the river that I came to examine the spot more closely."

"It would make a lovely picture!" said Dolly, gently. "Whenever I come here I must I cannot draw."

"Can you not?"

"I cannot make even a line. This is the loveliest spot in all the grounds, yet so one ever comes here. I spend all my spare time on the banks; I like to watch the rippling of the water, but I never met a creature here until to-day."

He smiled on the admission.

"Then you, like myself, are on a visit at Field Royal?" he hesitated, though he could not imagine whom she would be visiting there.

"No, I am not on a visit there."

"I hope we shall meet again."

"I think not."

"Why?"

"I don't know," said Dolly, simply. "You have come down to go hunting, haven't you?"

"I hate hunting!"

"Or shooting?"

"I hate shooting!"

"You seem to hate a great many things. You will be very dull here; there is nothing to do at Field Royal but shoot and hunt."

"I shall paint, I am an artist; and with this lovely scenery I shall have no lack of amusement."

"You are an artist?" She paused. "How happy you must be!"

Happy! He started at the bare idea. Happy! He with his miserable secret he must keep ever cherished in his heart; he who had been deceived in his fairest hopes, disappointed in his dearest faith. Happy! Why the very word was a mockery.

"I don't think there is much happiness in the world!" he said, bitterly.

"Oh, don't say that!" she pleaded; "it is such a beautiful world! There is so much that is lovely in it!"

He smiled.



"You are young," he said, gravely; "too young to have known trouble."

"No one is too young for that!" He looked at her again; he noticed the wistful lines about her mouth, and he knew that, child as she looked, she was no stranger to sorrow.

His curiosity increased. Who could she be? Why did she appear to him in the most secluded spots in all the grounds, and yet assure him she was not a visitor at Field Royal?

A bell rang out its summons loud and shrill. Dolly started to her feet.

"I must go. There is the gong." Herbert looked at her fixedly.

"That is the gong for breakfast at Field Royal. You said you were not a visitor there?"

"Not at all."

"But you are going towards the house; the path you have taken leads only to Field Royal."

The girl blushed deeply.

"Would you do me a favour?"

"A thousand!"

"I only ask for one."

"Name it."

"Do you know that Viscount Devereux has a sister?"

"Half-a-dozen, hasn't he?"

"Ah, but the youngest is a child, a little afflicted child! They do not love or care for her. I think they would be glad if she were taken, and she knows it; and she is sensitive and easily pained. When she knew her brother was coming here she made everyone promise he should not know she was at home."

"Poor girl! Devereux would not trouble his head about her?"

"No. Perhaps she knows the neglect would pain him, so wanted to keep her presence a secret; but she did want it."

"And the favour?" said Mr. Sinclair, pleasantly.

"Will you not mention to anyone that you have seen me, and that I—no, that Lady Mab—I mean, that we are both living in the west wing?"

"You have my word," he answered. "But why did you deceive me?"

"I?"

"You told me you were not staying at Field Royal."

"I said I was not a visitor; nor am I; I am Lady Mab's companion and governess."

Herbert put out his hand.

"When two people make a compact, they usually shake hands on it." Then, as the little fingers glided into his grasp, "You will trust me, and not let our meeting prevent your visiting your favourite spot?"

"I will trust you!"

"Really, Sinclair, your energy is overpowering!" was his host's greeting, when Herbert entered the breakfast-room. "Isn't it a splendid day? The hounds meet at twelve. I shall bring back half-a-dozen men to dinner. You fellows shall not say my last bachelor week in the county is a dull one."

Herbert turned to him with that smile so many had found irresistible.

"I wonder if you would say I had come down here under false pretences, Devereux, if I shirked the meet altogether?"

"My dear fellow! aren't you well?"

"Perfectly. But—"

"But you can't have had any bad news, for the post is not in!"

"It isn't that; it's your river's done the mischief, Devereux, nothing else."

Devereux stared.

"Do you mean it is haunted, and you've seen the ghost?"

"I mean it's the most splendid subject for a picture I ever saw, and I want to transfer it to canvas."

The Viscount threw up his hands.

"Pon my word, Sinclair, it's a pity you were born a rich man. You'd have been far happier grubbing away in a studio at the top of half-a-dozen flights of stairs!"

Everyone laughed; they really could not help it.

"Take your own way, by all means," said the Viscount, pleasantly. "Speak to the housekeeper, and let her make such arrangements for your creature comforts as you prefer. We shan't be in to lunch, but you have only to name your hour."

Mrs. Bond had duly carried the news that all the gentlemen had gone to the hunt, and Mabel had clapped her hands enthusiastically, so that it was much to the good woman's discomfort when, ten minutes later, she espied Mr. Sinclair lounging about the house with sketching materials tucked under one arm and a broad straw hat in the other hand.

"You'll be late, sir," she said, officiously.

"Oh! I'm not going to the meet. I'm off for a day's sketching. You're just the person I wanted to see, Mrs. Bond. The Viscount told me to come to you for some provisions."

"Certainly, sir. I'll have a basket packed and sent down at one o'clock. Where shall you be, sir?"

"At the end of the shrubbery; just by the river's bank."

Mrs. Bond shivered.

"Surely not where my lady—"

"Where the late Countess was supposed to have been drowned. Do you remember her, Mrs. Bond?"

"Remember her, sir! Why, it's many the night I cried myself to sleep after she was lost. You see, Mr. Sinclair, she was a sweet lady."

"She was."

"You couldn't know her, sir?"

"I saw her once directly after her marriage. I believe I can recall her every feature."

"Then you'll know if Miss Dolly—Dear me, I'm forgetting. I beg your pardon, sir, I'm sure."

"Granted, Mrs. Bond. I know what you mean. I met a young lady this morning in the grounds, who for one moment made me fancy the grave had given up its dead. Yes, I know her presence is not to be mentioned. I promised her to keep Lady Mab's secret."

"Then you see it, too?"

"The resemblance? Undoubtedly."

Mrs. Bond was ready to cry.

"I loved her from the moment I saw her, and little Lady Mab just worships her, but it'll be a bad day's work when the Countess comes home. She never favoured the later lady."

"She can't be angry with the poor girl for resembling her."

"But she will be, sir; and Miss Dolly's a friendless orphan from all I can hear. On the moment my lady's return's fixed I'll just give her a word of warning."

"But you can't believe the Countess would be really unkind to her?"

"Folks are different, you see, Mr. Sinclair. Some have too much heart, and so, I suppose, there's not enough left for others. Certainly my mistress never had her proper share."

Herbert broke away from the garrulous old woman, and went out on his sketching expedition.

## CHAPTER V.

It was a lovely day, though only the first of April. The air was soft and balmy, the sun had almost summer's warmth. Herbert's whole soul was in his art, and so the time passed so briskly to him; he was surprised when luncheon time came.

They did things well at Field Royal. In an arbour, just five minutes from the river, a footman had laid a rustic table with every possible delicacy.

Herbert was seating himself and discovering that he had an appetite when a cry of distress was heard—a child's voice, raised as though in tribulation.

Mr. Sinclair turned in the direction of the cry.

Three minutes' walk brought him to another arbour similar to the one where his lunch was

laid, only that instead of chairs there was one long bench by the side of the table, and on it rested a little girl.

The cause of her grief was evident; a donkey chair had brought her to the spot, and his reins hitched to a nail in the arbour wall; the donkey had been allowed to graze at his own sweet will. His own sweet will, however, dictated to him to run away. He had forced the nail out of the wall, and was now rushing at, for a donkey, a most break-neck pace down the long, smooth gravel path that led to the house.

To stop the donkey, to bring him back and fasten him afresh with greater security, was the work of a moment. Then Herbert bent over the child and set himself to comfort her. He succeeded so well that Mabel (after extorting from him the promise he had already made to Dolly) grew quite communicative. She even informed him it was so fine she wanted to have dinner out-of-doors, and Dolly had gone back to the house to tell the servants.

"But she's sure to turn back and come to me when she heard me cry," said Mab, regretfully. "Poor Dolly, it's such a long way to the house."

Dolly came in sight just then, very pale and anxious.

Lady Mab and Mr. Sinclair explained the accident to her at once, and then Mab, with the quaint gravity which was one of her most marked traits, introduced her two friends.

"Dolly, this is Mr. Sinclair—Mr. Sinclair, Dolly, my greatest friend."

He smiled. Neither he nor Dolly mentioned their first meeting. He only said,—

"But you haven't told me what to call your friend yet, Lady Mab."

Mab looked troubled.

"Her name is so ugly," she said, plaintively.

"Smith. Dolly is much too nice to be called Smith."

"Miss Smith," said Herbert courteously, "I fear you did not succeed in conveying Lady Mab's wishes to Mrs. Bond. Won't you both honour me by sharing my luncheon?"

He explained the ample provision for his own comfort. He talked of the scheme till it met with Mab's warmest approval, and, in spite of a little backwardness on Dolly's part the donkey-chaise drove its little mistress to the scene of Herbert's interrupted banquet.

There are some men who never appear to such advantage as with children. Herbert was of the number. He made Mab completely at home with him. In five minutes he amused her more thoroughly than Dolly had ever expected to see her for an hour. He made her a child genuinely, innocently happy. Then, as they were to return to the house and he lifted her into the donkey-chaise, the thought of her troubles came back.

"Mr. Sinclair, isn't it very hard that I can't walk about like other people?"

"Would you be happier, Lady Mab?"

"Say Mab, please," pleaded the child.

"Would you be happier, Mab, at a grand finishing school with your sisters? Is't it pleasanter here?"

For once Mab admitted that there were some compensations to her hard lot.

"Are you going to stay here a long time?"

"A week, I think."

"A week!" said Mab, thoughtfully. "Oh! Mr. Sinclair, I wish you would teach me to draw."

"To draw?" he repeated. "Why, Fairy, I never taught anyone anything in my life."

"I know I could draw," said Mab, feverishly, "if someone would teach me. Dolly won't."

"I can't, Mab," said Dolly, quietly. "I think I was born without a notion of drawing."

Herbert Sinclair, the most impatient of men, hated the idea of teaching anyone. But, after all, to the little cripple any amusement must be a relief—if she never even learned to hold

a pencil the lessons must be a novelty to her. He consented.

"You asked us to lunch!" said Mab, patronizingly, "we will invite you back again. We always have tea at five o'clock. You shall come then and have some, and I can take my drawing lesson after."

"And what will Miss Smith say?"

Dolly hesitated. Drawing lessons were the one thing Mab yearned for. Besides, the child had taken one of her passionate attachments to Herbert Sinclair. There was no doubt she would fret herself into a feverish attack if thwarted. It seemed to Dolly she must give way.

And Herbert grew to look forward to that hour in the west wing as something that brought a new chance into his life.

Lord Devereux found the hunting so good he determined to prolong his stay at Field Royal, and persuaded his friends to do so too. No one noticed that on the days when Herbert Sinclair followed the hounds he always returned to the house before the other men. No one guessed that of all the twenty-four hours he looked forward to most was the one he spent in the schoolroom teaching Lady Mab to draw.

And Mab was not the charm.

Mab had a genius for drawing—she was an artist even. Herbert had but little to do; a word here, a hint there, a little praise and encouragement spurred her on wonderfully. Herbert liked the child, but she was not the charm that lured him to the west wing. It was the slight, black-robed figure who presided at the tea-tray, or sat at the piano playing low, dreamy melodies, such as he loved. In a word, the west wing to Mr. Sinclair meant Dolly.

He fell in love with her, but he did so unconsciously. From the moment he saw her he was interested in her, but he could never have told when that interest changed to love. He would sit and watch her in rapt silence as she played. He would start at the very sound of his own voice, and yet he never dreamed of his own secret—never guessed that this meant love.

He had loved once—a boyish fancy, which had died when its object had deceived him, and left him stern and cold, with a secret trouble to hide from all the world. Since that he had travelled far and wide, had mixed in the best society of the day, seen every beauty of note in Europe, and run the gauntlet of their charms unscathed. How could he guess that there was danger for him, then, in a pair of violet eyes, and a girl's sweet face!

He might have gone on in his ignorance—he might never have guessed his secret until he had to say good-bye to her, but Mab's childish voice enlightened him. One evening he came in sooner than usual, and found his pupil alone, sitting on the sofa, with a very small kitten on her knee. Herbert looked round the room. Somehow, it seemed to him quite different—there was a chill emptiness about it. Lady Mab saw the look.

"Dolly's coming," she said, quietly, "Mr. Sinclair, do you like her very much?"

The question was put in all innocence, but it opened Herbert's eyes—as he heard the words he learnt his own secret. He did not like Dolly—to him she must be all or nothing—he loved her as his own soul!

Mab looked at him wonderingly.

"I thought you liked her?" she said, slowly.

Herbert rallied.

"I like her very much."

"Do you know, I wish mamma and the girls would never come back from Paris, and that you were my brother instead of Devereux?"

"I would be your brother gladly, Mab," seizing on the part of the question easiest to answer.

"Oh! I wish you were!"

Enter Dolly, a little paler, a little graver than her wont, or so it seemed to Herbert.

She greeted him, and then turned to the child.

"What were you wishing, Mab?"

"That mamma and the girls would never come back from Paris."

"Oh, Mabel!"

"That wasn't all," said the spoilt child. "I wished that Mr. Sinclair was my brother instead of Devereux, then we could all live together. Don't you wish it, too, Dolly? Oh, I know you do! You cried this morning over my music when I told you Mr. Sinclair was going away next week."

An awful pause. Herbert could hear his darling's heart beat. Fond as he usually was of Mab he could have beaten her at this moment with pleasure. The evening lost all its charm. Dolly talked in a most constrained, preoccupied fashion. Herbert was full of forced merriment, as though to convince her he had not heard that fearful slip; but things would not work harmoniously, and it was almost a relief to the drawing-master that Miss Smith did not stay to preside over the lessons.

When it was over, and he had left the west wing, it still wanted an hour to dinner. He was restless, agitated—he could not bear to meet the other men; and he turned off in the direction of the river, hoping a solitary stroll would calm his fevered brain. It was growing dusk now; it was difficult to discern shapes and forms, but all was very still, and, as he gazed upon the quiet waters, he heard a little sob, and a passionate lament.

"Oh! mother, mother! why didn't you take me with you? Oh! mother, how could you go and leave me all alone?"

"Dolly!"

Another moment, and he had taken her in his arms, had forgotten everything, his past, his present had vanished, every thought save that he loved her, and she was in trouble.

"Dolly!"

For one moment the girl had nestled in his arms, as though they were her rightful resting-place. Then she tried to escape from that tight embrace.

"Oh! Mr. Sinclair, let me go."

He only folded her closer in his arms.

"Dolly!" he cried, passionately, "do you know that I love you as my own soul? Dolly, do you know that you are dearer to me than all the world?"

And it was true. He did so love her, he did so hold her, and yet such love could bring her only pain. She had suffered much, but it was all as nothing to the agony that was to come to her through Herbert Sinclair.

She was to owe to him the keenest pleasure, the most bitter agony of her life. He was to teach her the true meaning of love, to unfold for her its bitter sweet. There would come a day when she would know all the suffering he had brought her, and yet she never regretted their first meeting.

Whatever misery, whatever suffering it entails upon them, they never wish they had not loved, for they have had its pleasure if they must bear its pain. Not to have loved means to be only half a woman, to have the nobler, tenderer half of a woman's soul never stirred into life.

There are wicked women in the world, there are desperate women and sinful women, but if I had to choose I would say deliver me to the tender mercies of these rather than to those of a woman who has not loved.

And held in Herbert's close embrace, the sweet spring air cooling her fevered brow, the leafy trees, the rippling river the only witnesses of her happiness, Dolly's soul woke to a new consciousness, her heart opened to a new bliss as she realised that she loved.

And he—

He stood there with all that was dearest to him in his arms, but he was not happy. Between him and Dolly there rose an awful barrier—a barrier no love could break down. Even at the moment he told of his love he knew that love must bring her sorrow. He ought to have fled to the utmost parts of the earth

rather than have lingered at Field Royal to win her heart. He ought even now to put her from him and depart. It was best for him a hundred times, best for her—their only safeguard lay in flight.

"Dolly."

Child as she was she understood there was pain in his voice. Despite her innocence she knew that some trouble weighed on him sorely.

"Oh! my darling!" he cried, "what have I done? Oh! Dolly! I have wronged you cruelly, but, my darling, I love you so, and yet my love can only pain you."

"It makes me happy," she murmured in his ear. "Herbert, the world seems another place now that I have your love."

The words were very precious to him. He kissed her again, and again, and again. The confession that must be made was deferred.

"And can love make you happy, sweet-heart?" he asked, oh! so wistfully.

"Love can do all things," answered Dolly, her golden head resting confidently on his shoulder. "Oh! Herbert, what can we want when we have love?"

He ought to have told her, only he could not. He only put his arms her and strained her closer to himself, as though he defied the laws of Heaven and man to part them.

"You love me!" he repeated, fervently. "Say it again, my darling!"

"I love you," whispered the girl, faintly. "Oh! Herbert, how little I thought a month ago of the happiness coming to me!"

Happiness—she said he had brought her happiness! He must remember that, must print the words fiercely on his brain to comfort him in the dark after time, that would come, that must come.

"Dolly."

They had forgotten all about the flight of time. What mattered it that the dinner was waiting for Mr. Sinclair, that Lady Mab was pining for Dolly! How could they think on this first evening of anything but each other?

"Dolly," he said, slowly, pausing almost as though he weighed each word for fear of alarming her, "could you give up the world for me? Would my love content you for the loss of all else?"

"I should not mind how poor we were," she whispered. "What does money matter while we have each other?"

She thought he meant a marriage with her might entail a loss of fortune.

Her innocence smote upon his heart. How could he tell her the bitter, bitter truth? and yet how could he keep it from her?

(To be continued.)

THE virtues which we all respect and admire are chiefly composed of efforts to secure the happiness or—which is the same thing—the well-being of ourselves and others. Honesty, fidelity, patience, charity, justice, benevolence, all contain as their main essence the happiness of those with whom we mingle. And the duty we owe to ourselves—healthful living, purity, industry, economy, self-development, are all such as will add to our power for good, to our social value, to our self-respect, and therefore to our permanent and truest happiness.

HUMAN LOVE.—No one who has looked into life with honest eyes can have failed to discover that it derives untold values from the love which welcomes its dawn, attends its growth, and advances step by step and soothes and cheers its old age. Human love is itself a pearl of great price. How it enlarges, enriches, and ennobles life! What beneficent ministries it conducts? What patient heroism and severe self-suppression it inspires? In a mother it is faith and hope and patience and effort and victory. In young hearts it is a transforming gladness, an awakening to the responsibility and to the rapture of life. In manhood and womanhood it is the balm of care, a refuge in temptation, and a source of serenity.



## A PLAIN GIRL.

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## CHAPTER XLIII.

As autumn advanced I became quite convalescent, and daily more impatient for news of George.

Now I heard of him in Ireland, now he was in London, another time in Paris. He did not write in a very sanguine tone, but he did not despair of success. He had the services of one of the sharpest detectives in England, who had told him that he "might make something of it yet."

As the leaves began to wither and fall off the trees, and carpet the walks and paths or flutter past the windows like a flight of brown birds on a windy day, and the sky assumed its heavy, leaden, winter aspect, my mother-in-law and I resolved to pack up bag and baggage and adjourn to London.

I felt that I would be nearer the scene of action there than buried away down in the country.

Miranda remained behind on a visit to her dear friend Mrs. Sharp, and her mother and I breathed, as usual, in a freer domestic atmosphere.

We had not been in town more than three days when, to our amazement, George arrived quite unexpectedly one morning as we sat at breakfast.

He looked worn and haggard and as if he had been travelling all night, as it turned out was the case. He had come straight from the banks of the Vann, and had met with a small success. That was better than nothing.

Whenever he had swallowed his breakfast and his mother had left the room, he said,—

"I could not say everything to my mother. It does not do to be too certain, and she has not the same interest in it that you have, Nell. I have got a clue at last!"

I was standing at the fire, nervously fiddling with a glass paper-knife, and as I heard this welcome news it fell from my hands, and was shivered into atoms on the fender.

"Never mind that—look at this instead," drawing out something from his waistcoat-pocket, something small, which was rolled up in half a sheet of white notepaper.

I gazed eagerly as it was slowly unfolded, and displayed a gold sleeve-link.

"The sleeve-link!" I stammered out.

"Yes, the very one, and," now holding it towards me in the palm of his hand, he said, "who would imagine that on that little insignificant thing that looks like a couple of brass buttons a human life may depend, that, small as it is, it is sufficiently important to be the principal factor in hanging a man?"

I said nothing, but gazed, and gazed in silence. This tarnished sleeve-link was probably to be another kind of link, too—the link to re-unite our divided lives!

"How did you get it? Where did it come from?" I asked at last, but I did not offer to take it into my own hand.

"From the very same cottage that produced the coat. Your friend the old woman only died last week, and, after the funeral, her stocking—her savings—were found in an old crock half-way up the chimney. She was a well-known miser, and, knowing this to be gold, had not had the heart to part with it."

"Will it be of any use—real use?" I inquired, expressively.

"Yes, the greatest! I can swear to Kant having the fellow of it in his possession; and, see, here are his initials, 'J. K.'"

"Yes, there they are, plain enough."

"It was a mere accident my seeing the other. One evening I was in his room; we were both going out to some dinner together, and I was waiting for him. I remarked that his dressing-case was open, and said something about his great show of jewellery, and he said,—

"I'm so awfully late! Just get me out my solitary stud, like a good fellow!"

"He was shaving, and we were greatly be-

hind time. I did as I was bid, and opened several places in vain. I was attracted by the one odd pair of links lying in a corner alone.

"The shape is unusual—lozenge-shape—and very yellow soft Indian gold. I, moved by some unaccountable impulse, took it out and held it up, and I now remember Kant's face as I made some trivial remark about them. His whole appearance as he stood, razor in hand, he looked as if he had seen a rattle-snake, or worse. He was livid, and told me very sharply to put up that rubbish, and I noticed as I put it away that he glanced at it furtively, as if it were some deadly thing; but, knowing him to have odd, queer, unaccountable fits, I said nothing, but proceeded to look out his opal solitaire.

"I might have saved myself all trouble, for he cut himself badly with the razor, and, making that an excuse, sent me off to the dinner-party alone, charged with his apologies and messages to say he was not well.

"I was convinced at the time that that gold pair of links had raised some unpleasant vision of the past. Little did I guess what a fearful vision it was, or that mine was then the unconscious hand that was welding the real link in the chain that would drag him to the scaffold!"

"And will it?" I asked, breathlessly.

"I cannot say; but he is undoubtedly the murderer, though another has suffered for him. He must bear his penalty himself at last. It seems too fearful that a man bearing the Queen's commission, that commanded my own regiment, that—in fact, it won't bear talking about!

"The only comfort to me is that, by all accounts, he has little or no English blood in his veins.

"I'm going over to Paris by the midday express, and taking two police officers with me. I fancy that, ere the month is much older, we shall return escorting some one with, like Eugene Aram, 'gyves upon his wrists!'"

Within the same week George had returned. I saw by his face as I stood at the top of the stairs that the battle was over, was won, and the day ours.

"Your father is cleared," were the first words, as he, regardless of such publicity as landing, took me in his arms and kissed me.

"And the other?"

"He is dead," he replied, gravely, now leading me into the drawing-room. "The arm of the law cannot reach him. He is before another tribunal now."

"How? Explain quickly—tell me all!"

"We went over with what Detective Toogood called a beautiful case, and saw him. He was much changed—aged by dissipation and ill-health. He thought I had come to see him in passing through Paris; but I quickly disabused his mind, saying,—

"No, I come on quite a different errand to a friendly call. My wife made a foolish attempt to bring home a certain crime to you once, and failed."

"She did," he exclaimed, "the pretty little fool, and burnt her fingers, thanks to her mad old father! It was all an hallucination on his part."

"But I am suffering under no hallucination," I said, "and I have come to talk to you about a certain gold sleeve link, that you lost one winter's day on the banks of the Vann."

"I—I never lost one, there or anywhere," he exclaimed, with an oath.

"Oh, yes," I replied, "you did, and its fellow has been found. The police are now examining your dressing-case, and I'm sure they can match this," and I brought out his long-lost link, and laid it on the table before him.

"And what if it does match?" he muttered, hoarsely.

"Simply that it proves that you only are the murderer of Mr. Sim. No stronger proof is required. The man, who was then a boy,

can swear to finding it where you shot Sim. The whole chain is quite complete. It has been tested link by link, and has no weak point."

"Kant's face was colourless, large drops of perspiration stood out upon his brow, and at this moment Toogood came in carry his dressing-case and followed by Kant's valet. The link was found and placed beside the other in silence.

"No one spoke for fully five minutes, and I was afraid to look at the culprit; but I need not have been. The loud ticking of the French fret clock was broken by his voice saying in its usual rather grating tone,—

"What a fool I was to keep it. Well, I knew it would come some day. Yes,' looking straight at me, 'I was a desperate man. Chance played into my hands, and opportunity. I had no notion of doing it when I set out that evening, no more than you had.'

"Everything you say now, I warn you, will be used against you," interrupted Toogood.

"It's no matter. There is a written confession in my desk. I've no relations, and it will hurt no one. I will fetch it. You need not be afraid,' with a sneer; 'there is no egress from the other room.'

"He went across, and they shut the door after him, and in about three minutes came back with a thick envelope in his hand, which he handed to Toogood, and then once more sat down, looking less concerned now than any of the rest of the party.

"It will be a blow to the 29th, though they never liked me; but, after all, what are all soldiers but licensed assassins? However, I never meant to be that. I was deeply in debt. For years I had been at my wife's ends. Men have no right to put their pauper sons into expensive cavalry regiments, and leave them nothing to live on but their wits. I was at the end of mine that cold dark afternoon when I met Sim in the lonely lane. He was cross, inclined to be cheeky, too, and more than hinted that he wanted his money at once.

"I half-joked with him at first, then we came to hot words. He said if I did not net pay up he would brand me as a defaulter, so stung to madness, I wrenched his gun from his hand, and shot him point-blank. He fell back without a cry stone dead.

"At first his death was a great relief. I eagerly seized his pocket-book, and felt safe; but after the hot, passionate fear of the moment was over I had a revulsion of horror. However, self-preservation is the first law of nature."

"I hid the body in some bushes, and ran home to mess. I had lost the sleeve-link in that momentary struggle for the gun. I always felt that if it were found I was a dead man.

"Fortune favoured me. All the proofs, like bad cards, tumbled one after another to Deane, and I need not say that I stood by and said nothing. I saw him transported; but I would not have seen him hanged in my place. No, bad as I was and am, I would have come forward on that. I have prospered, wicked as I am. That was a turning point as far as money was concerned, and not being pressed by Sim I was in comparatively smooth water.

"I have told all that is necessary. That poor, half-witted creature Deane will have his character restored to him to-morrow.

"I am not sorry for him—no, not a whit, for all he has suffered—for he married the only girl I ever loved, and her daughter is your wife," he added, to me—"a quixotic, impetuous, beautiful young fury, who bearded me in my own den."

"Here he panted, and said in quite another tone,—

"I've taken poison. Took it just now, when I went for the letter. It—it is beginning to work."

"It was true. In spite of all sorts of exertions and two doctors in a quarter of an hour

he was dead. He had evaded justice at the eleventh hour."

And so after being under a cloud for twenty-two years my father was cleared at last, not thanks to me, but to George; but, alas! the shock, the unexpected release was too much for his already shaken mind, and it gave way. He understood the happy truth, just for one whole week, and then all was mist.

He is quite gentle and harmless, and goes about the world with a companion (we don't call him keeper), and looks nothing more than a quiet elderly man, with bowed shoulders and a rather vacant, anxious face.

He has forgotten the past, which is a great mercy, and he devotes his time to writing a history of the world. Sometimes he comes and stays with us, and writes page after page, and fills piles and quires of foolscap, and seems to be greatly absorbed, interested, and delighted with his work; but in good truth no two sentences have sense, and it is from first to last most utter nonsense.

Some of his old friends see him now, and are very kind to him for the sake of old days and his blighted life, and those who did not know him whisper about "some queer story, and something that happened years ago and turned his brain."

They do not know the real facts, and never will; but the stigma of murder no longer lies in branded letters upon the fair fame of the Deane family.

George and I are extremely happy now. I have no secrets from him, and never will again as long as I live.

We are held up as a pattern, a model to other young couples of our acquaintance, and our bliss has been too much for Mrs. Sharp's fortitude. She cuts us dead.

Maggie is married, and we see a great deal of her and Captain Jarvis, also of Janie and Mary, and even uncle has so far relaxed as to pay us a whole week's visit. His affairs are more flourishing than formerly, and the market-cart is no longer in requisition.

We see a great deal of my mother-in-law, who continues to be a slave to little Georgie; but Miranda does not favour us often.

Miranda is married to the Dean, poor man! and she tyrannises over the wives of all the lesser clergy, and has become very gloomy in her views of life.

I believe she thinks that George and I are far too gay and worldly. I only know that we are both young, and prosperous, and happy, I am thankful to say, and we are gradually forgetting those long dark months and years, when I and mine were under a cloud.

[THE END.]

ONE means of confirming and establishing one's affections is by serving the loved. Nothing endears one person to another so much as aiding and serving him, especially if self-sacrifice is involved. Giving what is valued always increases affection to the recipients, even if it be only material benefits that are conferred, much more when it is our time, our labours, and ourselves.

GRATITUDE is a short cut to sincere and lasting friendship. Some people complain that they have no friends. Have they never had a favour done to them? Why, every man has had a score of favours done him every day of his life! Those who bear it in mind, who say a word of hearty thanks, who watch a chance to do a favour in return, never lack friends.

It is kindness that makes life's capabilities blossom and paints them with their cheering hues, and endows them with their invigorating fragrance. Whether it waits on its superiors, or ministers to its inferiors, or disports itself with its equals, its work is marked with a prodigality which the strictest discretion cannot blame.

## WANTED AN HEIRESS.

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### CHAPTER XXXV.—(continued.)

THE two men had arrived at an amicable understanding before their brief separation took place. After a few days' quarantine at a quiet seaside town the father and daughter returned to Combe-Appleton.

"So that graceless young man is likely to get better, my dear?" said Mrs. Brune, who had driven the fat pony over to the Rectory, eager to learn the latest details of the little romance in real life that had been brought directly under her notice.

"Yes," replied Ethel, with a smile and a blush. "We expect him down here very soon."

"Indeed! He will find Combe-Appleton rather dull after all his fast doings in town last season."

"Oh, but he is greatly changed," said the girl deprecatingly. "He has no idea of going back to that frivolous, extravagant existence. He intends to reside upon his estate when his health is once fairly established, and devote himself to its improvement."

"A certain nameless personage was sick, and a saint would be; a certain nameless personage got well, but never a saint was he," remarked Mrs. Brune, grimly.

Ethel laughed; she could afford to laugh now that the burden had been lifted from off her heart.

"Dear Mrs. Brune, it is not like you to be so uncharitable," she said, imploringly.

"Indeed, those words are not applicable in Archie's case. He is sincere in his intentions to turn over a new leaf."

"A whole volume would hardly be too much, considering the unprincipled behaviour of which he has been guilty towards two foolish, trusting women," replied Mrs. Brune.

"What is he coming down here for, may I ask? New leaves can be turned over anywhere, irrespective of locality."

"He wants me to help him," faltered Ethel, "and I have promised to do so. I must never call him weak again, since I have broken through all my own previously-formed resolutions in consenting to marry him."

Mrs. Brune pinched the soft flushed cheek nestling against her shoulder gently, while an amused look shone in her brown eyes.

"I thought how it would be before you started!" she said leniently. "Perhaps it will be best for you both in the end to come together. You will make him a good wife, and if he is capable of improvement he will receive all possible help and encouragement from his better self, meaning you, my dear. Without him I fear you would never be happy, so the advantage will be mutual."

"I trust it will."

"Your wedding dress must be trimmed with my old point," continued Mrs. Brune, coming down to practical details. "I shall put it on myself. I wouldn't trust any dressmaker living with that lace. Where is young Graceless going to stay? You cannot well have him at the Rectory. He had better come to me."

"If you would be so kind as to receive him," said Ethel, gratefully. "I had thought of this difficulty, but I hardly liked to ask so much of you."

"Nonsense, child; of course he can come to me. I shall be able to ascertain for myself then if he is fully cognisant of his shameful duplicity, and if he appreciates the undeserved generosity with which he has been treated. Someone ought to speak plainly to him. Your father is much too easy and forgiving, while you, being in love, don't count. If his eyes have not been opened yet to admit of correct perception I shall take care to perform that operation myself."

As soon as he was able to travel Arthur Joscelyn went to Combe-Appleton, and became Mrs. Brune's guest.

The old lady had intended to be extremely

censorious and didactic in her bearing towards him, even while carefully acknowledging the sacred claims of hospitality. But Arthur's manner disarmed her at once. It was so frank and humble, so free from any assumption founded upon his wealth and position. It would have been ungenerous to remind him of the wrong act that he had been guilty of since he did not attempt to ignore it, and the genuine nature of his love for Ethel admitted of no doubt. That he was ashamed of his past conduct, and desirous of atoning for it in the future, Mrs. Brune ascertained in the course of their first conversation. From disliking and doubting the young man she became his warmest advocate.

"Your fiancée improves upon acquaintance," she remarked to Ethel. "There are the makings of a better man in him, ready to develop under favourable circumstances. But he would never make much headway against adverse forces. He must always drift with the tide."

And, in her keen, incisive manner, the old lady had summed him up correctly.

A breezy peal from the ivied church tower, some flowers scattered by the village children, alone distinguished the quiet wedding. Arthur Joscelyn and his wife went to Nice for the winter, and society read with disgust the announcement of their marriage in the papers. The big fish, the eligible parti, had married the daughter of a country clergyman—a mere nobody, after all.

### CHAPTER XXXVI.

FOR nearly two years Percival Massey and his daughter led a wandering life.

From Algiers they returned to the Continent, pitching their tent now in Rome, then in Venice, or Milan, or Florence, according to the direction in which the financier's capacious fancy pointed.

His health was fast failing him, but he persistently refused to return to England. Was not Vincent Eyre dragging out a wretched existence there as a convict through his indirect agency? His native land had become hateful to him by reason of the man whose generosity and high sense of honour had preserved him from well-merited punishment and exposure.

He could not breathe the same air with Vincent Eyre, who, but for him and his, might have been a successful, contented man, with wife and children around him. As life and strength ebbed slowly away from him, and nervous fancies got the upper hand of reason, Percival Massey led a dual kind of existence, from the horrible fascination of which he was powerless to free himself.

He never sat down to a luxuriant meal without mentally sharing Vincent Eyre's coarse prison fare; he never pressed a soft couch without remembering the convict's hard pallet. Walking in the sunlight, with pleasant sights and sounds around him, the soft air blowing in his face, straightway there would rise up before him a vision of prison walls and a gang of stolid, heavy-visaged convicts taking their forced airing, while in their midst a strong noble face, bearing the unmistakable stamp of culture and refinement, regarded him with sad, reproachful eyes.

Step by step in reluctant imagination Percival Massey kept pace with the convicts round the prison-yard, and the owner of the strong, sad face was always his companion.

He pictured him as drooping and dying under the withering influence of those loathsome surroundings, or as a maniac, bereft of reason through the awful monotony of prison life, till it would be hard to say which suffered most—the convict, or the man who had been instrumental in bringing him to such a pass.

Percival Massey was "breaking up," as people say, both in mind and body, while the mental disquiet from which he was never wholly free hastened the approaching end.

Feeble, petulant, exacting in his demands upon his daughter's care and attention, the



financier might well have wearied out the patience of any one less loving and devoted to him than Gwendoline.

For some time past he had been gradually withdrawing his large capital from the various remunerative but more or less risky speculations in which it had been embarked, and re-investing it in a safer if less profitable manner, carefully confining any fresh enterprise within narrow limits.

Aware that for him the end could not be far off, he wished to ensure a substantial, well-invested fortune for Gwendoline the business details of which should give her but little trouble, and admit of but slight fluctuations.

As the time when he must needs bid the world a long good-night drew nigh earthly considerations weighed less with him, while his desire to make some tardy atonement for the erring past increased.

Wealth, position, a proud untarnished name, shrank into insignificance beneath the fierce white light of eternity. Not so the unconfessed sin. That, hitherto kept in the background, now assumed colossal proportions, and threatened to crush him beneath its weight.

He dared not die without fulfilling the promise made to Vincent Eyre that, sooner or later, Gwendoline should be made acquainted with the generous love-prompted, self-denying action that had saved her father from public disgrace, and warned him of coming danger. The love that had sealed the young man's lips, when life and liberty for aught he knew depended upon his speaking, must not go unacknowledged and unrequited, in so far as the making of it known to Gwendoline herself was concerned.

But if this promise were to be kept it would involve a complete disclosure, and Percival Massey shrank from the idea of humbling himself even to his own child, and losing caste in her eyes.

He put off the necessity from time to time till the very hours of his life were numbered.

They had drifted to Florence, where spacious, well-appointed rooms on the sunny side of the river had been taken for them. Percival Massey had a conviction that he would never leave the house alive, and he sought for a convenient opportunity to reveal the incidents connecting him with Vincent Eyre to his daughter, while speech and memory were still at his command.

He called her to him one glorious evening as he lay on a sofa drawn close to the window, and regarded her fondly and proudly as she bent over him in loving solicitude.

"What are you reading, Gwennie?" he asked in consequence.

"A novel, papa, by a new author. Would you like me to read aloud?"

"Not just at present. Sit down by me. I have a very different story to unfold to you, based upon fact with men and women, some of whom are still living for its characters."

She drew a low chair to the side of his couch and sat down, placing her hand upon his with a caressing gesture. The knowledge that she must soon lose him filled her heart with silent sorrow, while it intensified the value of the cherished, fast-fleeting intercourse between them.

From a lovely, impulsive ardent girl Gwendoline had developed into a queenly, gracious woman. Sound at the core, the suffering occasioned by a cruel deceit on the part of one whom she had loved and trusted had mellowed instead of blighting her nature.

She had emerged from her fiery trial with increased sympathy for others, enlarged experience, and a knowledge of human frailty that enabled her to form a more correct estimate of human worth. Life was no longer to her a fairy tale, beautifully illustrated, and bound in crimson and gold. She knew it to be a prosaic volume, containing many faulty passages, dull pages, and sad situations, a volume in which evil was badly delineated, and the characters were more or less wanting in some essential attribute.

Yet, on the other hand, she was not blind

to its redeeming points, its bursts of fervid eloquence, its flashes of humour and pathos, its variety of style, while the just distribution of good and evil among the characters—inky black and snowy-white being the exception, not the rule—could not fail to make itself apparent to her.

Wealthy and beautiful Gwendoline had received several offers of marriage while residing abroad from men whose social position was far beyond her own. A Roman prince had been among her wooers, and she might have formed an alliance with a distinguished French statesman. Had she been anxious to shine in diplomatic circles, or to enjoy the possession of a sounding title, in either case the desire might have been gratified.

But she steadily refused each eligible offer, somewhat to her father's chagrin. He attributed her fondness for single life to a lingering weakness in favour of Arthur Joscelyn, and he laid the blame of each refusal at that young man's door.

He could not have made a greater mistake. Gwendoline had banished Joscelyn from her mind as much as it was possible to do so. She certainly did not love him any longer.

The men who had proposed to her, however, had failed to arouse her interest, much less her affection, and to marry for the mere sake of marrying was farthest from her thoughts.

"I am waiting for you to commence, papa, dear," she said, gently, seeing that he had fallen into a reverie. "I am all attention."

"It is a long story, child," he replied, rousing himself with a visible effort, and facing the ordeal before him. "I must condense it if I would not weary you. It concerns an intimate acquaintance of mine, and I should like to have your opinion upon it."

She bowed her head in silent assent, and for the next half-hour his enfeebled voice was the only sound to be heard in that quiet room.

"My friend was comparatively young, Gwendoline, and very poor when he determined to hew out a fortune for himself, regardless of the traditions of his family, that were against any member of it turning his attention to trade or finance. Sick of genteel poverty, he entered a private bank in the capacity of clerk. His employer—a genial, unsuspicious, indolent man—finding him to be clever and energetic, with a good head for business, promoted him from one post to another till he filled the important office of head-clerk and confidential adviser.

"For awhile he remained faithful to his employer's interests. Then, tempted by the desire to amass a speedy fortune, and launch boldly out on his own account as a speculator, he commenced a series of frauds which, had the banker placed less trust in him, could scarcely have gone undetected, cleverly as they were carried out.

"A crisis came in the affairs of the bank at a time when the banker was seriously ill. His managing clerk seized this opportunity to abscond, taking with him a large sum of money, upon which the salvation of the bank depended, and leaving little behind him save the purposely falsified accounts tending to throw blame and suspicion upon the banker himself.

"The bank broke, and its originator died, some people said of a broken heart. To this day his commercial integrity remains unvindicated, while his detractor is still at large."

Gwendoline, listening intently, raised her eyes to his face in mingled fear and wonder. Could this story be original? It so closely resembled one told to her by Vincent Eyre long ago on a summer night at Twickenham. The incidents were almost identical.

What if Vincent Eyre's father and the man robbed and slandered by her father's friend should prove to be one and the same?

"The banker had two sons," continued Percival Massey—"mere boys at the time of their father's death. They took up his cause when they became men, and strove to prove the absence on his part of any fraudulent

intent by discovering the evil genius who had ruined him.

"He, meanwhile, had so completely changed his identity that they would have failed in their object but for the treachery of a former accomplice—a fellow-clerk, who had for many years been in the pay of the more successful thief.

"I am using plain language, Gwennie. Smarting under some real or fancied injury he sent for one of the brothers when on his death-bed, and acquainted him with the real name, social status, and residence of the man they wished to discover, besides making a formal deposition, in which he accused his old confederate of forgery and embezzlement.

"Only too glad to avail himself of such valuable information the young man went at once to his brother to seek his assistance in bringing the accused to justice. To his surprise and anger that brother refused to co-operate with him on learning the name of the man to be hunted down. He had fallen deeply in love with the only daughter of the latter before the cruel truth respecting her father's guilt transpired. For her sake, Gwendoline, he refused to prosecute the man who had so long baffled detection; for her sake—finding his brother implacable and bent on vengeance—he went in person to warn him, that the might escape ere escape became impossible, doing violence to his own natural inclinations. Child, why do you look at me in that way? I cannot bear it!"

He knew that Gwendoline had penetrated the thin disguise to the truth beyond it. The night visit, the hurried journey, the pretext of heavy losses and threatened insolvency coined to account for both, were no longer a riddle to her. Her father and his guilty, treacherous friend were identical.

"Go on," she murmured, fearfully, with averted face. Was the worst yet to come?

"His brother was killed by some person unknown an hour or two after his interview with the *ci-devant* clerk," said Percival Massey. "The latter got clear off without being suspected; the banker's son was less fortunate. They accused him of taking his brother's life in a moment of passion. High words had passed between them respecting the man he sought to shield always, for his daughter's sake, not his own—remember that, Gwennie—and his absence from home on the night of the murder aroused suspicion. They committed him for trial on a charge of wilful murder. His name was—"

"Vincent Eyre!" cried Gwendoline, wildly. "Father, father! he did not lift his hand against his brother on your account and mine! Oh! say that he is innocent!"

"Does not your own heart assure you of that fact?" said the financier, reproachfully.

"It did," she wailed; "but now I know not what to think. The motive that induced him to spare you might have rendered him anxious to silence his brother at any cost. Only prove to me that he is innocent, and I can bear anything else."

"He is innocent," asserted her father, solemnly; "no need, however imperative, no love, however great, would ever tempt Vincent Eyre to commit murder. When he left me on that fatal night it was with a distinct intimation that unless I made good my escape before the morning Richard Eyre would effect my arrest, while he would be powerless to render me any further assistance. I could swear that he meditated no attempt upon his brother's life."

"Thank Heaven!" was the faint reply that floated through the gathering gloom.

"Ere we parted I promised him that eventually I would tell you all, that you should requite him for the forbearance and leniency displayed, on your account, towards his father's traducer. His trial and sentence—unanticipated then—have rendered my hopes of a union between you futile, while they have added to the remorse already ranking in my breast. Gwendoline, he must have loved you passing well to remain silent, to refrain from any

disclosure likely to benefit himself, throughout his trial."

"And you could permit such a sacrifice, you could keep in the background while he was condemned to penal servitude, for lack of any evidence in his favour?"

"It was for your sake as well as my own," he pleaded; "and my evidence might not have led to his being acquitted had I tendered it."

She made him no reply, her heart was too full. The disinterested nature of Vincent Eyre's love had at length been clearly demonstrated to her.

For one brief, delicious moment she forgot his terrible, helpless position, and her father's self-acknowledged guilt. All other considerations were merged in the joy of knowing that she had been loved, and for herself alone, loved as few women are permitted to interpret the word, at the expense of all save the honour of the man who had dauntlessly sacrificed himself for her dear sake.

Unconsciously she had been hungering and thirsting in her loneliness for some such revelation. Now that it had come it surpassed even her wildest dreams and longings.

But, although the satisfaction remained the joy was short-lived. How could it survive in the face of such inexorable, joyless circumstances?

Vincent Eyre was a convict, doomed to penal servitude for life, while her father, whom she had regarded as the soul of honour, stood self-convicted of a shameful deed in the past, from the consequences of which Vincent had nobly exempted him.

Would the innocence of the man who loved her so well never be established? Would their hands never clasp again on this side of the grave? Must he die without even learning how dear he had grown to her? Surely, surely such a fearful fate would not be allotted to them!

"If my own child cannot forgive me what have I to expect or hope for in a future world?" said Percival Massey, despairingly. "In my case annihilation would be the most welcome boon."

The bitter words recalled her to a sense of love and duty. Her brief resentment against him vanished. Was he not her father, her good, kind father, who had never spoken angrily to her in his life, let his faults be what they might?

Kneeling down beside him she pillowed his grey head on her breast, and soothed him as if he had been a weary child, with fond assurances of love and forgiveness.

She could not bear to see him thus forlorn and abandoned in his own eyes.

"Can we do nothing to help him even now, papa?" she whispered, eagerly.

Percival Massey shook his head.

"We cannot *prove* his innocence, Gwennie, although we believe in it implicitly. I should like to have done justice to his father's memory before I died as some poor compensation. But I have dallied too long, fearful of the consequences to you and to myself. Had I a son now to whom I could confide the painful task of disclosing my misdeeds, and vindicating the unstained integrity of the man who befriended me with such disastrous results to himself; but even in that case I could hardly expect him to bring opprobrium upon his name by doing an act of justice from which I have always shrunk myself."

"You have a daughter, papa, who is willing to make atonement for that sin committed in the past, in so far as it can be atoned for, irrespective of consequences," said Gwendoline, firmly.

"Child, what would you do? Such a task is beyond your powers."

"Providing you are not to suffer I can and will do justice to the dead, and carry out the unspoken wishes of the living," she replied, her thoughts centred upon Vincent Eyre. "For the opinion of the world, as it affects myself, I shall care nothing; but I have no wish to bring disgrace upon the name of Massey."

Listen to my plan, and tell me if you think it is likely to effect the desired purpose without unnecessary exposure."

An expression of relief and gratitude crept over the financier's worn face as Gwendoline unfolded the idea that had occurred to her.

"Your woman's wit has found an easy way out of the difficulty that never suggested itself to me," he remarked. "The scheme, indeed, could hardly have been carried out during my lifetime, but when I am gone it will be an easy matter, so to speak. May Heaven bless and help you in the work of atonement you have undertaken, my darling."

Percival Massey's death took place on the next day.

"His life work is over," thought Gwendoline, as she pressed a last kiss upon the silent lips, "while mine is only just commencing."

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

Gwendoline could not go on living by herself in the quaint oak-panelled rooms, hung round with art treasures on the sunny side of the river Arno.

As soon after her father's funeral as possible she made her preparations for returning to England. The work she had pledged herself to accomplish lay in that direction, and she was eager to commence it.

To the various members of the Massey family, who had journeyed to Florence on being apprised of the financier's death, she made no allusion to the object she had in view, or to the glimpse she had obtained into her father's past life.

His statement was a sacred thing, concerning no one in the family save herself. She knew how to apply the knowledge she had gained, and to maintain a profound secrecy respecting the charge entrusted to her.

If she could help it, not even his own brother should ever learn the history of those years during which the financier had disappeared from polite society. None the less was she bent upon making some atonement for the sin incurred.

She travelled to England in company with her relations, but refused to make her home with any of them, although repeatedly urged to do so.

Such a proceeding would have curtailed her freedom of action. Her movements would have been commented upon and inquired into, and this was precisely what she most wished to avoid.

She rented a set of airy, pleasant rooms in the neighbourhood of Kensington, and established herself in this temporary home with Miss Banks, a former governess, who happened, very conveniently for Gwendoline, to be on the look-out for another "finishing" situation when the latter returned to town.

Miss Banks was only too glad to act as Gwendoline's companion and chaperon, instead of drilling an awkward squad of girls, and preparing them to shine in society. Her old pupil's gentle, considerate bearing, and the many little luxuries they enjoyed in common, were very much appreciated by the poor, hard-worked, much-valued gentlewoman.

Mild and elderly Miss Banks, beyond her acquired knowledge, of which she had a great deal, owned no distinguishing characteristic, unless a mania for collecting postage-stamps, for the ultimate purpose of getting a child into a school could be called one.

How the mythical child was to be got into the equally mythical school, and what share the postage-stamps, cut from old letters, had in placing her there, Miss Banks herself had but a vague idea. Nevertheless, she accumulated them diligently, and then sent them away to some foggy little society established to promote the benefit of mankind in general, and nobody in particular, firmly believing that in so doing she was hastening the arrival of the millennium.

In selecting Miss Banks as her companion, Gwendoline knew that, while possessing the

necessary countenance insisted upon by society, she would still be free to do as she liked, without any check or remonstrance.

Her relatives were inclined to resent such strong-minded behaviour on her part, but since she was of age they could not hinder her from following out her own inclinations and making her own plans.

Gwendoline knew how to put down interference when it passed a certain limit with a firm, but gentle hand; and after a great deal of well-bred "haggling" they sulkily acquiesced in her arrangements, and even condescended to pay her an occasional visit.

Gwendoline found the Kensington lodgings a convenient centre from which she could radiate out in any direction in pursuit of the object she had in view.

She had inherited the bulk of her father's money; she was known to be immensely rich, and yet her expenditure, without being niggardly, was far from being lavish, or commensurate with her income.

She was reserving her wealth in anticipation of a demand that would shortly be made upon it.

Her father's death had made a void in her life that she found it hard to fill. After having lived in a soft, warm atmosphere of love and dependence upon the kindly forethought of one who, until his health failed him, had anticipated each wish and relieved her from all responsibility, it seemed strange and sad to be left alone, compelled to think and act for herself.

She had left England an unhappy, despairing girl, grieving over the treachery of a weak, unprincipled man. She returned to it a woman, strong to suffer and endure, capable of appraising her former idol at his real value, and extremely thankful that she had not been permitted to bring lasting misery upon herself by marrying Arthur Joscelyn.

A deeper, truer love, built upon a firm basis, was hers now, while her life no longer lacked a definite object.

If the manly, self-sacrificing passion, of which she had become aware too late, filled her heart with helpless, patient sorrow, of its undying constancy she could entertain no doubt, while the feeling it aroused within her was infinitely preferable to the disgust and disillusion Joscelyn's conduct had evoked.

As a free man or a prisoner Vincent Eyre would never cease to love her. His terrible, unalterable position might give her constant pain, their enforced separation might wring her heart, but Vincent himself was incapable of wounding her.

Loyal, and tender, and true, the knowledge of his great love nerved and strengthened her, even when the disastrous consequences it had entailed upon him threw a deep shadow over her pathway.

Young and very beautiful, Gwendoline was yet old in suffering. Age should be reckoned by experience, not by years. In that case there would be children of eighty and the world-worn men and women of eighteen.

Gwendoline in her new capacity transacted a great deal of mysterious business, of which the import remained unknown to Miss Banks, the independent woman's uninquisitive, obliging companion.

She went on several short journeys by herself, and the London solicitor she employed—not the one who had managed her father's affairs—was in frequent correspondence with a local limb of the law.

Her real name did not transpire in this matter, nor was it affixed to any legal document. Her solicitor knew her only as a Miss Darnley, who was desirous of carrying out an important and peculiar charge intrusted to her by a relative since dead.

The legal interviews, copious correspondence, and unexplained journeys resulted in producing a stir and whisper throughout Vincent Eyre's native town, while an exciting rumour that something was about to be done after all these years in the matter of Eyre's Bank set everyone on the alert.



A meeting of creditors was announced to be held at the Town-hall, when each original investor would, as nearly as his or her just claims could be computed after such a lapse of time, receive an amount equivalent to their balance in the bank at the time of its failure, with interest at the rate of five per cent.

It was a strange stirring up of dry bones and musty, half-forgotten events. Many of the creditors who had gone to join the great majority had to be represented by their next-of-kin; some had left the town to reside elsewhere, while others had grown old and childish.

One poor old couple, whose savings had all been swallowed up when the bank stopped payment, were produced from the nearest union. Their joy on learning that a sum sufficient to keep them in comfort would soon be placed at their disposal, that they would be permitted to pass their remaining days together, touched the hearts of all who witnessed it.

While excitement ran high, and people were speculating as to the source from whence the funds proceeded, a long letter, or rather confession, to which was attached the facsimile of John Drew's signature, appeared in the local papers, creating quite a sensation in that quiet town.

The perusal of it caused a strong reaction of public opinion in the banker's favour.

People woke up to the fact that he had been cruelly misjudged on reading his managing clerk's confession of guilt and the detailed evidence that fully exonerated the deceased from any share in bringing about the failure of the bank to suit his own ends.

The posthumous publication of this letter, dictated by Percival Massey, alias John Drew, to his daughter on the last night of his life, excited universal comment.

Other provincial papers copied it, while some of the leading dailies made it the subject of a short article to prove that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was not the only individual in the habit of receiving conscience money.

That John Drew had made substantial atonement for his dishonesty late in the day, coupled with the fact of his being dead, prevented people from judging him very harshly.

How he had amassed such an immense fortune, and who the invisible administrator could be, remained for ever a mystery to them.

The local solicitor, through whom the payments had been effected, was diligently pumped and liberally treated at the club in the hope of extracting some information from him.

But he was as much in the dark as the rest, although professional reticence would not allow him to admit this humiliating fact.

He contented himself with looking preternaturally wise, and hinting that he could divulge a great deal were he not pledged to secrecy, an aggravating policy that only served to whet the baffled curiosity of his interrogators.

Some opined that John Drew had made his money at the gold diggings; others declared that he died a cattle-king in America. The majority were in favour of his having speculated successfully nearer home with his ill-gotten gains.

None of the surmises approached within dangerous distance of the truth, however. Gwendolen breathed freely on finding that no one was likely to trace the connection once existing between John Drew and Percival Massey, the financier.

The idea of distinguishing between the two careers had emanated from her in the first instance, and met with her father's ready sanction.

With Percival Massey, she argued, the victims of the bank failure need not become acquainted. Their claim was upon John Drew, the fraudulent clerk. Once let that be

satisfied, and his subsequent career, his real name, might justly be withheld from them for the sake of his family.

In this manner she contrived to satisfy the claims of justice, and to avoid unnecessary exposure.

Her large fortune had been reduced by one-half in her earnest effort to atone for the wrong act committed by her father. For this she cared little. Could Vincent Eyre but have known that his father's memory no longer rested under a cruel aspersion, that the real culprit had acknowledged his guilt, she would have deemed herself amply rewarded.

But those prison walls shut out all news from the external world; they stood between Vincent and the glad tidings of atonement made and honour vindicated. Toiling on in hopeless misery, unaware of the love awakened for him in a woman's breast, of the life-work relinquished for that woman's sake, and nobly carried out by her in token of loving gratitude, no gleam of joy fell athwart his dreary path.

Gwendoline experienced almost the first feeling of happiness and satisfaction that had been hers since Percival Massey's death on reading a short paragraph in the local paper with which her solicitor kept her supplied.

The creditors whose losses had been so amply compensated had called a meeting on their own account to discuss the propriety of erecting a monument over the grave of the man upon whom so much undeserved vituperation had been lavished, both during his lifetime and after it.

Such a suggestion, coming from the people who had formerly been most bitter against the poor banker, was sufficient in itself to prove how thoroughly and effectually Gwendoline's work had been done.

In due time the monument was completed, and the pure white marble bore a long inscription recording the virtues of the man who lay beneath it, beyond the reach of earthly praise or blame, and briefly alluding to the exceptional circumstances that had led to its being erected.

Not by his sons, who had sworn to avenge him, or through the exertions of any personal friend were the banker's fair fame and integrity finally vindicated in the sight of all men.

To the daughter of the treacherous employé, who had brought ruin and disgrace upon him, had fallen the task of rescuing his name from opprobrium. But for her the marble monument that singled his grave out for special notice would never have been erected.

Now that her work was accomplished, Gwendoline shrank nervously from contemplating the sad, listless future.

Lonely and joyless it stretched before her, while she extended her arms in vague, unprofitable yearning over the wide, impassable gulf that separated her from the one whose presence would, for her, have converted a barren, sandy desert into a paradise.

She went occasionally to see Birdie, and the child always spent her holidays with the two quiet women at Kensington.

Vincent had provided for her previous to his sentence being passed, determined that his sister's child should not come to want; otherwise, Gwendoline would gladly have maintained her.

Jessie MacNab had died in the workhouse a month or two after being admitted. Gwendoline had ascertained this upon inquiry. Had the unfortunate woman been still in existence she had fully intended to have her removed to some more comfortable home. From what her father had told her she felt that poor Jessie had a direct claim upon them, and, in spite of reason and commonsense, she could not help regretting that death had put it out of her power to acknowledge that claim.

She went out but little, while she did not encourage any of her relatives to visit her very often.

The invitations that came for her as time

wore on were generally refused. She had lost all her old liking for society, and the quiet life she led with Miss Banks was in harmony with her subdued, sorrowful mood.

Turning over the evening paper after dinner with scant interest she came across a thrilling account of the capture of a noted buglar, for whom the police had long been on the lookout.

The murder of more than one policeman was ascribed to him, and in his case the extreme sentence of the law was likely to be carried out. English juries are not so fond of bringing in extenuating circumstances as their French brethren.

Gwendoline turned from the detailed account of the capture with a shudder. She had felt a profound aversion for anything bearing upon capital punishment or penal servitude, since she had been obliged to think of them in connection Vincent Eyre.

Other and less painful topics drove the buglar from her mind. And yet his capture was the hinge upon which hung the whole of her future life.

(To be continued.)

## HAD WE NEVER LOVED SO BLINDLY.

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### CHAPTER XXVIII.

FLORA TREVANNION sat alone in the sitting-room after Sir Basil Fane had left her, feeling dazed and bewildered, as if she scarcely knew where she was.

Sometimes it seemed to her that she had made a bargain, and paid a price. Eustace was to be cured, and she was to marry Sir Basil. Instead of paying the surgeon's fee she was to pay the Baronet.

And then she told herself that she ought to be the proudest girl in the world, because he had chosen her before all the rest who would have been so willing to be selected.

His love was a treasure which she ought to prize beyond everything when he poured it out so lavishly over her young head. He was so noble, so generous, so tender-hearted, in spite of his stern face, and rather haughty bearing. There was nothing mean or calculating about him; he seemed as far above the generality of country gentlemen as Snowdon is higher than the Surrey hills.

Though he could ride across country with the foremost in the wake of the hounds, and handle a rod or a gun with skill, he could talk of something else besides fox-hunting, and other kinds of sport, for his brain had not grown torpid amongst bucolics.

He was a lover to charm a girl by his personal beauty and winning smile, and one to please a woman by the power of his intellect.

With him there could be no dullness, for he would wile away the hours with the most interesting conversation; with him there could be no doubt, for he was unchangeable as a rock. Oh! it must be happiness to be his wife—only—only—she felt so frightened!

Mrs. Willoughby came into the room, and her face was a study. Her expression was as complicated as her feelings. She was sorry that Flora had cut out both of the twins, and was to make a "splendid marriage" as she called it, before either of them had had an offer; but it redounded to her credit that her husband's ward should be so satisfactorily married from his house, and all the neighbourhood would say they had done their duty by her.

With a conscious pride she therefore enclosed her in her matronly arms, and murmured as she kissed her,—

"My dear child, I wish you all possible happiness."

Then Flora, softened by the kind words, and having no mother to go to, put her head down on Mrs. Willoughby's shoulder, and burst out crying.

The solicitor's wife was quite taken aback, although she knew it was the proper thing to drop a few tears on these occasions; but such a deluge as this from a girl whom she always considered rather reserved was almost alarming.

She made her sit down, and patted her hair, muttering such soothing words as came into her head. She was not a bad-hearted woman in a general way, only she had been jealous of Flora from the beginning, for her children's sake; and many a mother in her position would be tempted to be unkind to a girl who was far more attractive than her daughters.

Now her heart was softened to her, and she remembered that the poor child had no mother, and she tried to take her place.

"You know it is such a capital match! They say Lady Rivers wanted him for her daughter, and the Duchess wouldn't have been sorry to secure him for hers; and Greylands is such a beautiful place—with a rent-roll of I don't know how many thousands—and nobody seems to know if you would ever be able to go back to Trevanion Hall, so that this is the most fortunate thing that could have happened—and not far from us, too, so that you needn't feel lonely, for the girls can run up and see you whenever you like, and such a good thing for Eustace! I was always so sorry that we couldn't do more for him, but you see Mr. Willoughby is so much engaged, that we couldn't see much society; and now you will be able to give parties of your own, dances, and dinner-parties, and that sort of thing to make the place cheerful for Sir Basil. Child, it is a great destiny for you," her voice quite awe-struck, "and I only pray that you may be equal to it."

"Why did he ask me?"

"Why? Well," with a smile, as she thought it the most extraordinary question possible, "I should think you knew as well as I do. It was pretty evident from the first. When that silly Jenny made herself unhappy about Frank Rivers I told her there was no occasion—you were sure to be Lady Fane. Dear, dear, to think how much there is to be done, and so little time to do it in! I am sure I hope there'll be some money forthcoming, for I couldn't bear you to go without a proper trousseau. We must see about it at once."

"Oh! not to-day!"

Mrs. Willoughby's flow of words bewildered her; she wanted to be alone, and to think it all out by herself. At present she was in a dream, almost a nightmare. Old things seemed to be slipping away from her, and the new coming on so fast. There was no breathing space allowed.

Mrs. Willoughby left her after a few words of practical advice, then Emily and Jane came in, kissed her rapturously, and said they were so awfully delighted.

They were very much excited, and made a good deal of noise, laughing almost hysterically, for an engagement in the house was very upsetting. And who could say but it would be one of their turns next? Matrimony was so catching.

"You must have ducks of dresses for your bridesmaids, and Sir Basil is sure to give beautiful presents," said Jenny, in a transport, as she imagined herself receiving some wonderful bit of jewellery. There would be nobody now between her and Frank Rivers. Hurrah!

Flora said very little, but they were quite satisfied at having the conversation to themselves.

When they had taken themselves out of the room Mr. Willoughby came in with a very grave face. He said nothing at all, but simply took her in his arms, and kissed her, with the tears fast gathering in his eyes. What would the house be without his Poppy? He would miss her more than anyone could tell; but it was not of himself he was thinking as he grieved. He was uneasy in his mind, and yet he could scarcely have told anyone the reason why.

There was nothing against Sir Basil, and what he saw of him he liked; but as far as he could make out there was a mystery about him, and as a lawyer, he always thought very badly of anything he could not get to the bottom of.

The luncheon bell rang, so he gave her his arm in his old-fashioned way, and led her down, blushing and trembling, to the dining-room.

She scarcely dared to raise her eyes lest she should see a broad grin on Winter's face.

He was very attentive to her, and wanted to fill her glass about half-a-dozen times, as if he thought a bride-elect must be half-intoxicated; but she had the presence of mind to shake her head whilst she played with a slice of lamb which did not get any smaller.

All that afternoon she thought of Eustace, but she could not possibly go to him.

He would be glad, she knew that, and surely that was enough for her, but she longed to feel the clasp of his thin fingers, and to look into his blue eyes.

There were only those two of the Trevanions in the world; and without him she would always feel desperately lonely.

Of course he would live at the Abbey now, and there would be no question of a return to the Firs.

Would she have to ask Sir Basil, or would he take it as a matter of course? Whilst she was wondering, Jenny came to tell her that the carriage from Greylands was at the gate, and Eustace inside it. They were to have a drive together, and then Flora was to be dropped at home.

"Is he there?" she asked, with a quick blush, as she put on her hat.

"No, strange to say he isn't."

"Just like his kind thought!" and she flew downstairs, leaving Jenny surprised at the top.

She sprang into the carriage and kissed her brother, looking into his delicate face with fondest affection, whilst she clasped his hands in both her own. How thin he looked, and how frail! Ought he really to be out? Wouldn't it be too much for him?

"This is stunning!" he whispered, as he squeezed her fingers, and she knew there was no doubt about his feelings. A rush of thankfulness and joy came over her, as she nestled close to his side; and they drove over heath-covered hills to the forest, with the soft, August air playing in their faces, and the sunlight laughing on the fields and the distant waters.

They did not say very much, for both their hearts were full; but she felt inexpressibly refreshed and comforted by being together, alone with him, and without any of the outer world to look on.

"I say Flo, what fun we will have when I'm able to get about again?" Eustace broke out excitedly, just as the drive was coming to an end. "What a brick Fane is! I shall owe my life and yours, and everything to him; yet he'll scarcely let me say thank you. There never was anyone like him. He ought to be set on a marble stand and worshipped."

"The marble stand won't be necessary," she said, with a smile, as she thought of the joyful time coming when Eustace would be like other men, and no longer a helpless cripple. Couldn't she fall down and worship any man who gave her back her brother with the dreadful curse of lameness taken off him?

"Good-bye! darling," contenting herself with pressing his hand, as the footman was looking on, and sinking her voice to a whisper "Soon there will be no good-bye, as we shall always be together."

He laughed, and shook his head.

"There will have to be two to that bargain, and the other won't be me."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

"Mr. Fane is in the drawing room. His compliments, and he would be glad to have a

few minutes' conversation with Miss Trevanion."

This announcement made by Winter at the end of dinner, in a measured tone, took the whole party by surprise.

"What on earth can Mr. Philip Fane want with you?" and Mr. Willoughby turned a perturbed face towards his ward. "I think I had better go to him, myself."

"If he asked for Flora, I suppose he wants nobody else," remarked his wife, whose curiosity was excited.

"I daresay he is only in a hurry with his congratulations," observed Emily, with some acidity. "If he had waited a little longer he would have shown better taste."

"Must I go?" and Flora rose reluctantly.

"Perhaps you had better. If he keeps you too long I shall come in. I don't like the fellow a bit."

"Now, papa," cried Emily, "I think he's very pleasant. I can get on with him, much better than with Sir Basil."

"A change has come over the spirit of your dream," remarked Jenny, with a smile, whilst Flora walked out of the room and into the drawing-room, her face slightly flushed, and her heart beating fast.

"I hope you will forgive me for intruding at such an hour, Miss Trevanion," said Philip Fane, as he bent over her hand deferentially, "but I had a pressing reason for it."

"Indeed! That chair is the most comfortable," pointing to one at a little distance.

"Thanks, I think I would rather stand, till I've had my say out." He was dressed in his evening things, with a light coat thrown over them, and held his hat in his hand, as if he felt that his retreat might have to be made with speed. He cleared his throat, and looked out of the window, as if he did not care to meet her eyes, as he said slowly, "I heard some news this morning which startled me, and I've come to ask if it is true. Are you engaged to my cousin?"

"I think so," her lashes drooping. "You had better ask him if you doubt it."

"I prefer trusting to your lips than to his. Isn't it rather hasty? Is it wise to take such an important step?"

"Really, Mr. Fane I can't see that this is any business of yours," she interrupted, indignantly.

"But it is. Why shouldn't it be mine as well as anyone else's? He is the nearest relation I have in the world."

"Then it is on his account you've come?" drawing herself up with shy dignity.

"Not at all. He would be the luckiest man in the world if the engagement stood, but I maintain that he has no right to marry. Don't be angry. I'm your best friend, and I want to save you before it is too late."

"You are very good," sarcastically.

"No, I'm very bad. I'm not disinterested, and I don't pretend to be."

"Everyone knows that you are the next heir to Greylands."

He bit his lip, and a dull red flashed across his face.

"Pon my soul, you do me injustice. If you will have the truth, my interest is in Flora Trevanion, not in the Abbey of Greylands."

There was a pause, during which he watched her face closely, and saw that he had offended her deeply.

"I'm frank with you." She thought of Sir Basil's words, and determined to be on her guard.

"I might have got up a tale, and pretended that I had no concern in the matter beyond pounds, shillings, and pence, and then you would have listened to me."

"Indeed, I shouldn't. I never will hear one word against Sir Basil, unless you speak it before his face."

"Nothing I should like better, but it would spoil everything. One day I promise you," and his eyes flashed. "I'll speak before his face, and he shall have no chance but to listen to me. But then he must be single,



without a wife to be stabbed to the heart by a knowledge of her husband's sin. You don't know what is before you, or you wouldn't be in such a hurry for a wedding-ring."

"I'm not in a hurry," with an angry blush.

"I'm told the wedding is to be in three weeks' time. You couldn't very well have shown more speed," a cold smile upon his lips. "But I know it is he that is pushing it on, not you, and I know the reason why. Do you think it is honourable, Miss Trevanion, to get a poor child irrevocably into your power, when you are aware that a crash is coming?"

A horrid misgiving came over her, in spite of her confidence in Sir Basil. She remembered the man over whom he had broken his whip, and she saw him (Sir Basil, not the other man) once again lying on the hill-side half-maddened by some secret trouble, and heard his passionate prayer addressed to himself—

"Hate me, for Heaven's sake, hate me!" Why did he implore her to hate him now? Whatever it might be, she would bear it from himself and not from Philip Fane, and she answered him coldly—

"I don't understand what you are talking about."

"No, and you won't understand until it is too late. Oh, Miss Trevanion! his voice, deepening, his manner growing in earnestness as he went on: "Listen to me. There is a mystery about Basil; you can see that for yourself. Why did he stay away from Greylands for five years after it came into his possession? Wasn't it natural at least to run down and have a look at his new inheritance? Why did those placards appear on the very day of his return? The people knew nothing about it, no more did Mitchell. They were placed there by a man who knows more than I do, but I am waiting till I can screw it out of him."

"I know him," cried Flora, as she vividly remembered James Carter thrusting one of the odious papers into her hand, and its being torn from her by Sir Basil.

Philip Fane stepped back in amazement.

"You know him?" he said, as if he could scarcely credit his own ears. The gulf seemed wide between that creeping, low-bred villain, and the girl whom he thought the prettiest and daintiest on earth.

"At least I saw him on the day of the picnic."

"But he didn't dare to speak to you?"

"Yes. He gave me one of those horrid papers, and said something impertinent."

"What was it?" eagerly.

"Not worth repeating."

"But I might see a hidden meaning in it."

"Perhaps you might, but I'm not going to tell it you."

"You are too unkind. Will you put off your wedding for six months? Surely that would not be too long to enjoy the privileges of an engagement?"

"I see no use in keeping Eustace waiting, for no reason at all."

"There is a reason. But what is your brother waiting for? You talk as if you were going to marry him."

"He is waiting to be cured," her sweet face lighting up with sudden joy. "The operation cannot come off till I can go up to town with—Sir Basil—to nurse him," looking down and blushing.

"Now I understand it at last. Trevanion's the decoy; this hope of a cure the bait," he cried, in great excitement. "Don't let yourself be deluded. Don't let yourself be hurried. Believe me if you will only consent to wait for six months you will owe me a debt of gratitude for life."

"I can't wait—and there is nothing against Sir Basil," throwing back her head and looking him full in the face, her beautiful eyes flashing. "He is the best, the truest gentleman I ever knew."

Her beauty made him nearly mad; her words seemed to sting him. "Your experience has been so large," he said, with a

sneer, "and every man nowadays with a handle to his name and a decent rent-roll is a gentleman."

"Shall I send for Mr. Willoughby? If you have a story to tell he is the best person to hear it. He would not believe too readily, and he wouldn't repeat a word."

"No. I will not tell it to anybody but yourself. When I have found out all that is hidden from me then you will hear it, whether you will or no, and your fine castle in the air will crumble about your ears. Till then I shall hold my tongue."

"And till then I hope you will keep away, and not plot against a man under his own roof," her breast heaving with indignation.

"I am not plotting, and I shall certainly keep away—at least as much as I can. You are very hard on me, Miss Trevanion. I came to do you a service, and you treat me like a pickpocket."

"Sir Basil has done you many services, and how do you behave to him?" looking up at him with reproachful eyes.

"Has he told you that he paid my bills?"

"No. You told me so yourself. He never says one word of all the good he does."

"No, he is as reserved as a closed door. He doesn't talk at all about himself. Ask him if he was in Monte Carlo in 1880?" with an evil smile.

"Ask him yourself. I don't like hitting in the dark."

"Would you be afraid of asking Mr. Willoughby if he had been anywhere at one particular time?"

"I don't know. I never ask him anything about his private affairs."

"Would you call me impertinent if I asked you if you had been to Rome?"

"No, of course not."

"Then why not inquire if Basil has been to Monte Carlo?"

"He would suspect me of some purpose in the question, and—I don't choose to"—falling back on a woman's frequent resource—a negative without a reason.

"Oh, let me save you even against your will," he cried impulsively, catching hold of her hand, which she instantly snatched away.

"For Heaven's sake, listen to me. I believe that Basil—the man who wins you by gratitude not by love—is—this word stuck in his throat as he met her eyes full of scorn.

"I know what Mr. Fane is," she said quietly, though her voice was tremulous with passion—"a coward!"

He turned white to the lips. "Thank you. I am a coward because I don't brazen out the truth like a woman without waiting for proofs! Some day I shall hold them in my hand—and then—and then," his eyes kindling with overpowering rage and disappointment—"you may throw yourself on your knees before me, but I won't hold them back."

"I shall never do that," standing up with her neck drawn up proudly, her face white as his own.

"I think you will," coming close up to her, and looking into her face with glowering eyes.

"Oh Flora, if you had loved me it would have been better for both of us."

"Not for me," and she stepped back, repugnance and loathing visible on every feature.

"Good-bye. I trust to your honour not to mention what I have said." Bowing low he turned to the door.

"For your own sake or Sir Basil's?" she asked scornfully.

"For his entirely." He closed the door behind him and she was alone.

Mr. Willoughby found her still standing with hands clasped and eyes fixed on the floor. "What did he want with you, Popsy?"

She raised her head and looked round at him, the corners of her mouth drooping. "He wanted me not to marry Sir Basil."

"Aha! Mr. Philip Fane wants every good thing for himself, but he would never have you with my consent, if he were the baronet instead of the other."

## CHAPTER XXX.

THAT night Mr. Fane abruptly left the Abbey and returned to London. There were few to regret him, for Sir Basil only tolerated him, and Eustace Trevanion had taken a violent dislike to him. He felt instinctively that he was Sir Basil's enemy, and suspected him of some foul design. Therefore he breathed more freely when he was out of the house, though sometimes he was sorry not to have him under his eye, where he could watch what he was up to.

Meanwhile the preparations were being hurried on, and the wedding-day was fixed for the seventeenth of September. Flora Trevanion was not allowed much time to think, and for this she was thankful, as she felt matrimony was such a fearful leap in the dark, that unless it were taken quickly her courage would be likely to fail her. Sometimes when lying awake in bed, her brain too unquiet to admit of sleep, it would strike her as strange that she was, as it were, to be finished off and done with before she had had time for the love-dreams in which most girls indulge.

Sir Basil had come suddenly into her life, which had been so simple and conventional till his appearance—with Frank Rivers for her only particular friend, and a game of tennis, or a dance at home for her principal excitements; and now after bursts of tropical storms, such as on the day of the picnic, and gleams of glorious sunshine, as when he drew her to him, and told her that her brother might be cured without the terrible surgeon's knife—now they were to be linked together for ever, in spite of the cloud that hung over him, in spite of those secrets of his unknown past!

He came from day to day, and everyone noticed what a change had come over him.

Years seemed to be taken off his age. Instead of thirty he looked like twenty-five; his face lost its sternness, and his dark eyes were as happy as a boy's. He gave her jewels till she laughingly told him she would soon be able to set up a jeweller's shop, and he treated her with deferential tenderness as if his bride were a queen.

Mrs. Willoughby told him that he would turn the child's head, but it had no effect.

She told Flora that his way of going on was quite absurd. Anyone would think that he was marrying someone far above him, when she had no money and no title, and he had both, but she didn't get any answer.

Flora was too bewildered to be quite happy, and when alone with her lover she shrank so shyly from his caresses, that sometimes a shadow crossed his face as a fear darted through his mind, "Doesn't she love me after all?"

Lady Rivers came to call and offer her congratulations. If she had ever wished to secure Sir Basil Fane for her son-in-law she betrayed no sign of it in her manner, but kissed Flora gently on both cheeks, and said she was glad to think that as Lady Fane she would be a neighbour for the rest of her life.

Nesta Rivers murmured her good wishes in a shy undertone, but squeezed her hand so tight at the same time that the diamonds in her engagement ring nearly dug a hole in her fingers.

She did not look at all disappointed, indeed Flora suspected that she was glad to think that Eustace Trevanion was not likely to leave the neighbourhood when his sister was established at the Abbey.

A new hope sprang up in her heart. Now that there was a chance of Eustace being cured, he might soon be looking out for a wife himself, and who could make a fitter or more appropriate wife than the gentle, tender-hearted girl, whose heart had gone out to him with womanly compassion when other people disdained the cripple?

Nesta was to be one of the bridesmaids, with Emily and Jane Willoughby, Alice Winder, and two others, Miss Evelyn and Miss



["YOU MAY THROW YOURSELF ON YOUR KNEES BEFORE ME, AND I WON'T HOLD THE PROOFS BACK."]

Emmeline Fane, cousins of the bridegroom. Their dresses were to be of pure white, which had just come into fashion when cream's long reign was ending, and their small bonnets were almost entirely composed of tiny ostrich feathers and pearls.

Flora's trousseau was furnished by the principal tradesmen in Hardchester, for she said she did not care in the least for grand, high-sounding French names, and much preferred to give her own neighbours a chance.

This put them on their mettle, and the dresses were turned out to perfection, with every frill and bow and founce of lace finished off in a most superfine manner. Of course the wedding-dress was an exception; that came from Mélanie's in Regent-street, and was a most cunning combination of simplicity and beauty.

Jenny and Emily were delighted with the presents Sir Basil gave to the bridesmaids—diamond brooches in the shape of an arrow—and the latter especially wondered what Edgar Winder would think of it. Perhaps he might make an allusion to Cupid's arrows, and having got so far go on to a proposal, and then Flora would not be the only bride in the place, though the match would not be such a grand one.

There was no end to the hopes and fears which this marriage between the daughter of Lionel Trevanion and the richest man in the place gave rise to. But most people kept them to themselves, and the surface of life was tolerably unruffled.

The wedding-day dawned dimly, the sun a red ball hidden in a fog, and every leaf and flower and tree dripping as after a heavy shower of rain.

"Oh, such a day, Flo!" and Jenny bounced into her bedroom, with all her light-brown hair hanging in a dishevelled mass over her shoulders. "I feel inclined to cry."

"Don't, you'll spoil your looks; red eyes won't do with a white bonnet," and the bride-

elect tried to smile, though her heart felt oppressed with care on this, the most important day of her life.

She wanted to be alone as she went on with her toilette, but this Jenny would not allow. She had evidently something on her mind, which she had a difficulty in bringing out, and fidgeted about the room, taking up the dainty satin shoes with the pearl buckles, inspecting the wedding-dress with its frills of real Brussels lace, admiring the diamond stars which were to fasten the veil.

"You won't be ready if you don't go," Flora said, gently, though she was dying to get rid of her.

Then Jenny came a little nearer, and bending over a pair of twelve-button gloves which were lying on the table, said, in a hurry and a fluster,—

"I never told you—Frank told me to say that he would never forget you. All nonsense, you know, because young men always do."

"Yes, all nonsense," said Flora, slowly, and then old nurse and the housemaid came in followed by Mrs. Willoughby, and took possession of the bride, whilst Jenny with a very red face escaped.

This message had been entrusted to her when Frank found that he hadn't a chance of seeing Flora again before he went; but for reasons of her own she had kept it back, and only told it now because her conscience pricked her so uncomfortably.

The wedding-dress was on, the bracelets fastened, the last touch given to the small spray of orange blossom nestling amongst the brown curls; and all those who, on some pretext or other, had crowded into the room, stood in a circle round the bride in breathless admiration.

Envy and jealousy were both forgotten, for she conquered them all by the magic of her beauty.

Winter came up the stairs and had a good peep before he delivered his message.

Mr. Willoughby turned round and saw him.

"Well, what is it?"

"A shabby-looking fellow, sir, wanted to see Miss Flora, but I told him 'twasn't possible."

"Did he give any name?"

"James Carter, sir. Said something about a picnic, and said the lady would remember."

"Has he gone?" Flora asked, eagerly, as the colour rushed into her face.

She could not tell if she were glad or sorry when the butler said he had gone. The wild curiosity of Bluebeard's wife was upon her, and yet—and yet—it might be better if she never knew.

Jenny and Emily looked at her in surprise. It seemed to them a very unorthodox thing for a bride to be interested in everyday affairs, such as a stranger's call.

"Mr. Trevanion's waiting, miss."

Then the bridesmaids in their frills and furbelows scuttled downstairs, jumped into the carriages and drove off in a flutter.

Mrs. Willoughby came next, and one or two dowagers, then followed the bride with her guardian opposite to her, her brother by her side, his hand clasped in hers.

As she went up the crowded church she was trembling as if with fear, but as she stood by Sir Basil's side and heard his full rich voice saying each response as if he were so glad to make it, a great calm came over her, and her troubled heart was at rest.

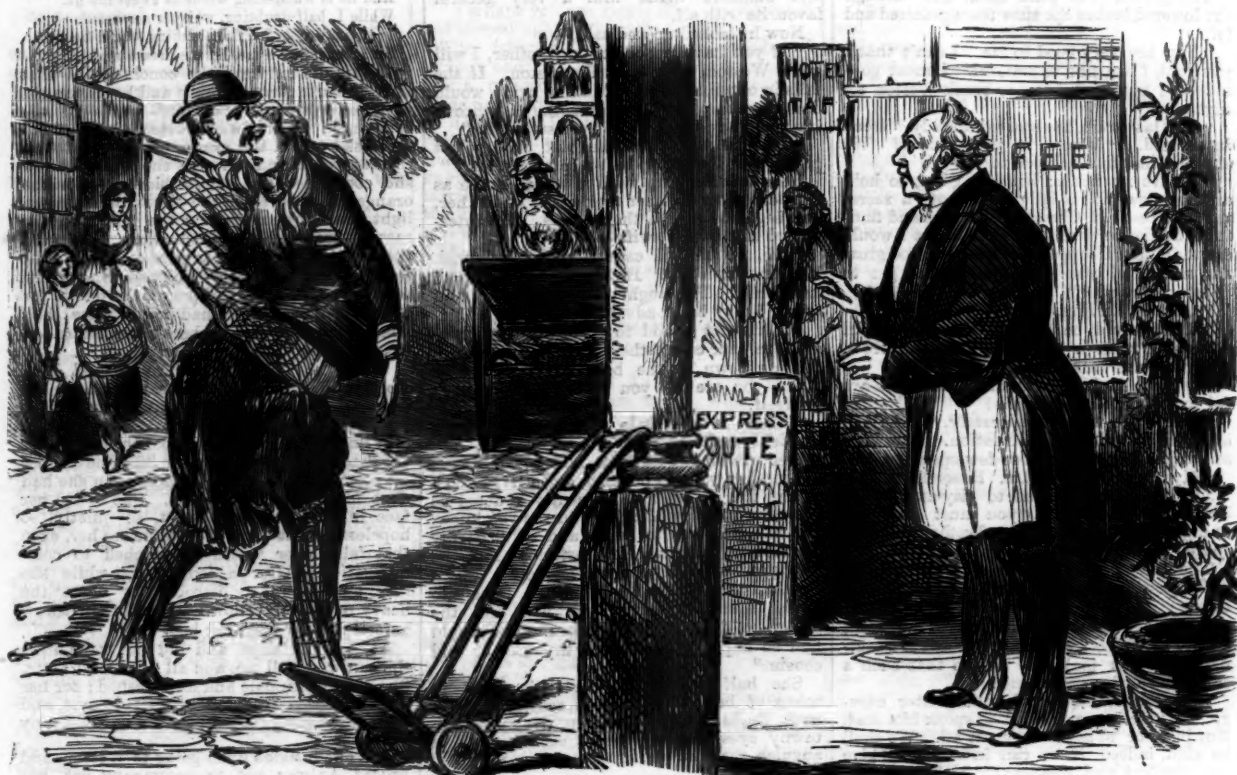
No one noticed the shabby figure crouching behind a pillar, or heard the savage curse he muttered as the bridegroom passed,—

"May he lose her as soon as he's got her. May he die when he's happiest, curse him!"

(To be continued.)

HERE is a menu for some of our hotel chefs. A doctor states, "If a child does not thrive on fresh milk, boil it." He, however, omits to say how long the child should be boiled.





["OH! MR. ROSSVELL, WHAT IS IT?" ASKED THE LANDLORD.]

NOVELETTE.]

## ON A HILL SIDE.

### CHAPTER I.

AYLMER ROSSVELL walked slowly over the Cheddar Hills towards the Cliff Hotel, where he with his mother and cousin were spending the sunny weeks of August. He carried a huge bouquet of heather, purple, lavender, and one single spray of rare white, the finding of which is supposed by the Scotch to bring such luck.

As he reached the stile separating the main part of the cliffs from the path leading down to the road, he paused and looked at the scene before him with appreciative eyes.

At the foot of the two ranges of cliffs were the little white cottages comprising the village, so sleepy save for the tourists; the pretty grounds of the hotel, with their flower-beds, artificial fountains and miniature waterfall, the ivy-grown arbours and rustic terraces. Before him stretched the Mendips, purple in the setting sun, and seeming to melt into the very clouds; and around him on every side was plentiful verdure, lush grass, with nodding harebells and sweet-scented thyme—altogether a scene to make glad one's heart.

The church clock struck six, and he started in some surprise; then vaulting over the stile, began his descent.

Suddenly he paused, shading his eyes with his hand, and looked intently down at a dark object which lay motionless among the harebells and thyme.

Was it a woman? and, if so, why did she lie so motionless, so rigid?

With something like fear in his heart he hastened his steps, slipping, stumbling down the stony way, until he reached the object which had attracted him.

It was a woman, and judging by the slenderness of her form she was young.

Aylmer Rossvell knelt beside her, and called softly to her, but received no response; then he touched her, trying to unclench the small hands in which were grasped harebells and grass, as if she had clutched them in falling. She lay face downwards, and her head was so muffled in her mantle that Aylmer had no idea what manner of creature she was—if she had merely swooned, or if her silence and rigidity were those of death! He began to be seriously alarmed, and shouted to some men in the road to come to his assistance, but they were engaged discussing the price of corn and the probable dissolution of the then government, so that his shouts passed unheeded.

He threw aside his heather, even the rare white spray, and lifted her gently in his arms, resting her head upon his knees.

At the beauty of the face, which then was revealed to him, he was surprised and startled. He removed her close black hat, and masses of yellow hair flooded the stranger's shoulders, and fell about his arms in wild luxuriance. Her complexion was wholly at variance with the golden waves and curves, being that of a brunette, whilst the curving lashes and finely-marked brows were black as night.

He laid his hand upon her heart, and felt it beating faintly under his palm.

"Thank Heaven," he said, "she is not dead! I must get her down somehow; the water will know what to do."

He staggered to his feet. He was not a strong man; and the girl, though slender, lay in his arms so supine, so helpless, that it was with considerable difficulty he made his way down the hill side. But at last the descent was accomplished, and he reached the road. One or two men volunteered their help then, and asked if the lady had had an accident; but vouchsafing no answer he entered the hotel, where the landlord met him in the hall.

"Oh! Mr. Rossvell, what is it?" he asked, with breathless curiosity.

"Are my mother and cousin in? Please

open the door for me. I am fatigued, and send Mrs. Rossvell to me."

He entered one of the rooms hired by them, and laid his fair burden upon the couch, seating himself beside her. Mrs. Rossvell entered hurriedly—a pretty, elderly lady, with a timid manner.

"My dear Aylmer, who is this young lady, and what ails her?"

"That is more than I can tell. I don't think she has had a fall. I saw no bruises. I fancy she has fainted; it has been so hot, you know. As for who she is I am in ignorance, but from her dress and appearance I should say she is a lady."

Mrs. Rossvell was down upon her knees, chafing the small hands, which, on being ungloved, were found white as snow, and delicately formed.

"Ring for Irena," she said, at last; "she is so clever a nurse."

Aylmer obeyed, and then went out; and presently a girl of twenty entered. She was fair and sweet to look upon, but her prettiness faded into nothingness beside that wonderful face lying on her aunt's shoulder.

"Mrs. Trethwick has told me all she knew, and so I brought restoratives with me. Now, aunt, bend her head forward—so. Ah! that will do. Now for the smelling-salts. How lovely she is!"

For a long time the stranger resisted all their efforts to restore her to consciousness, but at length, with a sigh and a sob, the black lashes lifted, and a pair of wonderful eyes looked with frightened questioning at the two kneeling figures. She pressed one hand to her brow, and said, with the faintest possible foreign accent,—

"What is this place? I thought—I thought—I was on the hill side."

"You were a short while ago, but my son found you there in a swoon, and carried you down here to us. Pray lie down and rest. I am afraid you are very ill."

The golden head sank back, and through the lowered lashes the slow tears gathered and fell.

"You are very good to me. I can't thank you, but I am not ungrateful. I must go—indeed I must. I have to reach Weston to-night."

"The last train has started already," Irena interposed. "Where is your home? We shall be glad to assist you to it."

"I have no home; but was going to hold an interview with a lady who wants a secretary. I reached Cheddar at noon, and finding I had some time to wait, thought I would see the clinic. I suppose the heat was too great for me. Did you say I could not get to Weston to-night?"

"Only by driving."

"That would be too expensive," the girl answered, with a contraction of the brow. "Could I not walk the distance?"

"Oh, no; it is several miles, and you are far too weak to attempt one!"

"But," she urged, desperately, "I shall in all probability lose the situation. There are so many applicants, and so few openings."

"My dear," said Mrs. Rossell, whose tender heart was moved to pity at so much beauty and loveliness, "you must stay here to-night under guest. Miss Trethwick has a spare room, I know."

The tawny eyes of the girl flashed one swift, passionate glance at the pretty, elderly lady.

"You are most good to me," she said, softly, her voice "braising the words to sweetness." "You make me believe that such a thing as charity still exists!"

"You must have had some bitter experience," Irena remarked, "to speak like that. But just for to-night forget it all. We shall be glad, indeed, if we can in any way give you comfort and pleasure! And you must not refuse to accept what we so frankly offer," as the stranger began to protest; "and in return we will only ask your name!"

The last rays of a setting sun shone full into the tawny eyes until they were almost amber, a bright streak of colour flushed her cheeks, and she answered, tremulously,—

"I am Leonie Templeton—an orphan."

"Then you have a double claim to my pity," Irena said, softly. "I, too, am an orphan, although my aunt does her best to make me forget my losses. Now, we take it for granted you will stay. Where is your luggage?"

"I left it at the station. There is not much of it."

"We will send for it; and now try to rest, and Mrs. Trethwick shall bring you some tea."

Aunt and niece then went into an adjoining room, where dinner was laid for three, and Aylmer entering, the conversation naturally turned upon Leonie Templeton.

"I wonder," Irena mused, "what she will do if she loses this situation by her want of punctuality? Aunt, you said, often lately wished me to have a companion, because it is lonely when Aylmer is away; why not engage Miss Templeton?"

"That is a very good suggestion," Aylmer said, approvingly.

"My dears, you must not jump to such rash decisions. Remember we know nothing of the young lady, and she may not be a fit person for us to associate with."

"That is unlike you, mother; and I suppose she would have some testimonials as to character and ability?"

Mrs. Rossell looked nervous and irresolute.

"Suppose we learn more of her before proposing this thing? And it would be as well for her to go to Weston in the morning. If she satisfies her would-be employer, very well; if not, she can return to us."

Aylmer looked unusually thoughtful. He was not a handsome man by any means, neither was his face indicative of much strength, either physical or mental; but it was pure and gentle; and his quiet, inoffen-

sive manners made him a very general favourite with all.

Now he looked up and said,—

"If you have no objection, mother, I will go to Weston with Miss Templeton. If she fails in obtaining this situation, pride would doubtless keep her from returning and throwing herself upon the charity of strangers."

"I think your plan the best of any yet proposed. Now suppose we return to her?"

Leonie looked up with a weary smile as they entered. Aylmer took a seat beside her, and began to unfold their plans. She interrupted him with a swift,—

"Oh, no, no! I cannot accept so much kindness from you. How can you tell that I deserve it? For aught you know to the contrary, I may be an adventurer!"

"I am not afraid to trust my own judgment in your case," the young man answered, smiling down at the beautiful face; "and when you see fit, you will tell us more of yourself."

"There is very little to tell. My parents are dead, and I have no living relatives. My father was an Englishman, and a gentleman; my mother was a Spaniard, and I lived most of my life at Madrid. Brevetly I acted as secretary to Lady Marville, but, as you know, she has gone out to India, and required my services no longer. Her testimonial is the only proof of ability I can give you."

"And that will be all sufficient. I begin to hope, Miss Templeton, you will find the secretaryship at Weston taken. You would find so happy a home with my mother and cousin."

She half-ostentatiously her little hand in token of her gratitude, but swiftly drew it back, flushing deeply; and in the wonderful, tawny eyes there gathered such a look of anguish that the young man was constrained to say,—

"You have known heavy calamities?"

"Yes," she answered, a catch in her breath. "I sometimes wonder I am not mad;" then she added, swiftly, "but the goodness I have received to-day will be like an oasis in my life. Tell me your name, that I may remember it with gratitude in all the years to come."

"I am Aylmer Rossell; my cousin's name is Irena."

"Thank you," and she leaned back among her pillows, whilst the young man watched her with a strange, new interest.

She was so lovely, so frail, so different in all her attributes to any woman he had ever seen; and, for the first time in his life, his heart quickened with a sense of nameless fascination, the principal element of which was unrest.

Irena's voice broke the sweet dusk silence. At twilight she always sang to her aunt and cousin, and she made no exception now to the rule. The song she chose was one by Howard Crosby, a pretty, pathetic ballad, with a refrain.

"Never to meet again, love; never until you die;  
Parting I know is sad, love, and you've said your last good-bye."

So sang the girl; and in the quickly gathering night Leonie clenched her slim hands, and set her teeth upon her nether lip, to silence the sobs which rose from her passionate heart, and struggled for utterance. In the silence which followed the song she feared that they would hear her deep-drawn breaths, and prayed like a mad thing for the calmness she so sorely needed. Again Irena broke into a flood of melody. Oh! why must she choose the saddest of songs? Why would she unconsciously torture Leonie's heart with remembrance of dead days—when the man she loved had leaned low over her as she sang that very song in her rich, deep contralto.

"The sun is setting, and the hour is late;  
Once more I stand beside the wicket gate;  
The bells are ringing out the dying day,  
The children sing on their homeward way;

And he is whispering words of sweet intent,  
While I, half-doubting, whisper a consent.

Is this a dream? Then waking would be pain,  
Oh! do not wake me, let me dream again."

Leonie did not hear the conclusion of that song, because through brain and heart ran the well-remembered accents and words of the companion of that forgotten night. Once more she was in the grand, old room of that Spanish villa, and through the open window she could see the starry blossoms on the orange grove beyond; the sky with its moonlight and myriad stars; "the bloom of the cassia breathed spice on the gale," and through it all ran the tremor of a love that faded and hoped and worshipped. She turned her face to the wall, and prayed for death, for the lover of that hour had proved false; had done his bitter best to break her heart—to cross the very life out of her.

When she went to her room, and Mrs. Rossell had left her, she sat down at her open window, and gave herself up to the memories which came crowding upon her. She knew it was vain and foolish; but under the shadows of those majestic lulls she felt her own loneliness and misery more than she had done for many weary weeks. She bowed her face in her hands and wept, so quietly, so hopelessly, that surely could he see her, even that false lover would be touched to compassion. After a long, long while she rose, and began to disrobe; let down the heavy masses of yellow hair; and then threw herself wearily upon her bed.

At last she slept, and did not wake until the sun was well up, and all the hotel astir. She went down pale and unrefreshed; for her sleep had been troubled by evil dreams, and Irena exclaimed that she looked unfit for any exertion.

But she insisted upon going to Weston, and begged Aylmer not to accompany her, but this request he would not grant, so they started for the station in one of those queer little conveyances which seem the pride and delight of the natives.

Reaching Weston, Leonie begged Aylmer to wait her return in a narrow, picturesque lane, and went on alone.

He seated himself on a bank, and, drawing out a copy of "Uncle Remus," endeavoured to while away the time by reading.

But the queer stories failed to interest him; his thoughts would stray to Leonie with a persistency that almost angered him.

What was she to him that he should be so absorbed in her? For aught he knew she might be, as she said, an adventuress, and yet he could not connect deceit or guile with that weary, beautiful face, or believe that rich voice could utter paltry falsehoods.

He did not wait very long for her return. Hearing steps along the road he looked up, and saw her coming towards him, slowly and dispiritedly.

"You have not succeeded?" he asked, pathetically.

"No, I am too late," she answered, wearily, and sat down on the bank at a little distance from him.

He was conscious of a great pleasure in her failure as he leaned towards her.

"Then you will let me take you back to my mother?"

"There is nothing else left me to do; to live I must work."

"We will do our best to make you happy," more eagerly than he usually spoke; "and, of course, if you do not like your duties, you can seek other employment."

"Yes; let us go now. Our train is nearly due."

They walked back together, and reaching Cheddar, found Irena waiting them on the platform.

"I had a presentiment that you would come back to us. I am very glad, Miss Templeton!"

"I hardly know whether to be glad or sorry!" Leonie answered. "I am so afraid that I shall disappoint you."



Irena laughed. "I don't know," she said, "but I think that is scarcely possible," then turning to Aylmer, "we have received such good news since you left us. Mr. Maxwell has written to auntie, saying he shall join us tomorrow, and I am almost mad with delight to think what glorious times we shall have. We can picnic on the cliffs, and do the caves together; then there are so many places of interest round Cheddar. Do you know the locality at all, Miss Templeton?"

"No; I have never been in Somersetshire before. I came yesterday from Taunton."

"Oh! then we can promise you a great deal of pleasure," Aylmer said, "and my friend Maxwell's coming is just the thing. My mother does so little walking or climbing, so that without him we should be an awkward number. When a party counts three only, one is sure to be left out in the cold."

"Suppose we go into luncheon now; afterwards we can initiate Miss Templeton into the ways and wonders of Cheddar Valley."

Miss Roswell received them kindly, and when the meal was ended had an interview with Leonie, which ended in her being engaged as Irena's companion. Mrs. Roswell having declared herself satisfied with Lady Marzials' testimonial.

The girl was evidently agitated, and on hearing her new friend's decision, caught her hands with a pretty half-foreign gesture and kissed them.

"You have saved me from despair!" she said, and her tawny eyes glistened gratefully through her tears. "Oh! I hope I pray you will never regret your goodness!"

"I think I shall not do that, child," Mrs. Roswell said, gently. "Now go and join Irena—that is, if you are not too tired for walking."

Aylmer decided it was too hot for very arduous climbing, so they walked along the narrow winding road lying so white and smooth between the two ranges of rugged cliffs, and Irena pointed out all the wonders of the place—the sugar-loaf rocks, and the Lion Rocks, and tried to discover the Ivy Chair, but failed.

As they passed by the low, white cottages women ran out and accosted them with, "Tea, ladies? Best accommodation, and only ninepence," or "sixpence," as the case might be; others exhibited stones and ferns, and followed them long distances up the road. But these were only minor troubles, and Irena was very much inclined to laugh them away.

"We won't visit the stalactite caves until Theo—Mr. Maxwell—comes."

The cousins were so kindly, so attentive that Leonie's depression lifted, and she found herself chatting more cheerfully than she had done for many a long day. The walking had heightened her colour, and her strange eyes had grown brighter. Aylmer looked at her with increasing admiration, and found himself giving almost exclusive attention to her words. Once Irena, who was walking a little in advance, turned, and said, frankly,—

"Yesterday, Miss Templeton, I thought you lovely, but I never realised how beautiful you are until now. You remind me of a picture I once saw."

Leonie flushed hotly, and said, with a nervous laugh,—

"Your candour is novel, and, pardon me, a trifle amusing."

"Yes; Irena would never make a diplomatist, she is far too open. I think that, perhaps, is her chief charm. Deceit in a woman is even more repugnant than in a man."

The bright flush died out of Leonie's face.

"I cannot agree with you, Mr. Roswell; but in either it is bad, and productive always of ill."

She spoke in such a changed voice that involuntarily Aylmer glanced at her, and for a moment a fear assailed him that perhaps this woman was not all she seemed; then he almost hated himself for his doubt of her.

"Perhaps you are right, Miss Templeton," and turned lightly to another subject.

The following day Theodore Maxwell arrived, and was greeted with effusion. He was a handsome young fellow of five-and-twenty, well-born, rich, and talented; proud of his name, intolerant to vice and folly; perhaps too much so, as his intolerance sometimes made his judgments very bitter and merciless. But on the whole he was a great favourite with society, a still greater one with the Roswells, and it was rumoured he had a marked penchant for pretty Irena, which she fully reciprocated.

When the young men sat together in the hotel grounds Theodore said, removing his cigar from his mouth,—

"What a handsome girl Miss Templeton is! Who is she? She looks as though she had a story."

"So she has," and Aylmer proceeded to tell the circumstances under which they became acquainted.

"I never saw beauty of so wonderful and fascinating a type. Why, her eyes are positively amber when the light rests on them, and if she would only smile more often—be less reticent—she would be dangerous to most fellows' peace of mind."

"I don't know that I should like her altered in any particular. She is simply perfect as she is."

Theodore looked curiously at him.

"Should not wonder if you're caught at last," he said, half smiling. "I never heard you praise any girl so highly. Am I to wish you luck?"

Aylmer's somewhat sensitive face flushed.

"You forget," he said, gravely, "I had never met Miss Templeton until two days ago, and I certainly don't believe in love at first sight."

"I would not go so far as that. It is not the rule, certainly, but it is the exception that proves the rule." But your cousin and the lady in question are about to join us," and, throwing a way his cigar, he went forward to meet the two girls.

Irena welcomed him with a smile and a blush, Leonie with a faint bow. He placed himself between them, but addressed himself almost entirely to Irena, for it seemed to him Miss Templeton did not wish to talk. She was very silent all that afternoon, and Theodore Maxwell found himself very often speculating in his own mind about her past life, and what was the cause of her melancholy.

"It could not be a recreant lover," he thought. "Surely no man could be false to so lovely a creature?"

In the twilight Aylmer proposed singing, and Irena gave them all their favourite ballads. Then it was Leonie's turn, and after a momentary pause she broke into a lovely Spanish song, the words of which she had that day translated for them. Perhaps none of them were quite prepared for such exquisite melody as filled the room then. The liquid notes of that wonderful contralto held them silent—stirred the very depths of their hearts.

Theodore Maxwell, who was no mean musician, leaned nearer, and strove to see the singer's face, but the twilight hid it from him; only it seemed to him that there was anguish there, and that the tawny eyes were tear-filled.

When she had ended he sat quite silent. Aylmer stirred uneasily, as if he feared the sudden stillness would be too rudely broken, but Irena said, swiftly and softly,—

"I think I shall never sing again; you have made me dissatisfied with my own performance."

Perhaps she hoped that Theodore would assure her her singing was good, but he made no remark, and she felt a trifle disappointed, until Aylmer clasped her hand kindly.

"My dear, your voice is very pretty, but we must not expect all to be born nightingales."

She laughed, and begged Leonie to give them just one more song—"only one."

The girl complied, and the haunting words and melody of "Our Last Waltz" filled the little room.

After that conversation became general, and at an early hour each retired to his or her own room, Theodore Maxwell looking puzzled and ill at ease.

"I can't account to myself for my folly in being so completely fascinated; I am a greater fool than I believed myself to be. I wonder if little Irena really cares for me; to-night I am inclined to hope she does not." He paced impatiently up and down his room. "It must be her marvellous voice which has cast such a spell over me; to-morrow I shall be my usual sober self."

And yet, when he lay down to sleep, the face that haunted him was Leonie's, and not Irena's; the eyes which seemed to burn into his very soul were tawny, and not brown.

He rose in the morning with an uncomfortable sense that he had not control over brain and heart, a restless longing to meet Leonie again, and to hear her voice call him by his name.

"What fools we men are!" he said, savagely, and went downstairs.

## CHAPTER II.

The days passed swiftly and pleasantly with the little party at the Cliff Hotel. There were so many excursionists in the place, every six days out of seven, that they had plenty of food for amusement and speculation.

Leonie was most fond of wandering over the cliffs, and seemed, despite her apparent fragility, never to be tired of the rough climbing. She had a steady head, a light and sure foot; she needed no help along the stony ways, and her companions regarded her with wondering admiration, of which she was singularly unconscious.

Theodore Maxwell spent much time in thinking of her beauty, and marvelling what it would be if the cloud could for an instant be lifted from her face, and the sadness leave those wonderful eyes of hers.

She never spoke of the past or her friends, never referred to her former life, even indirectly, and he felt there was a mystery about her which it would be well to solve before he committed himself to any declaration of love, for it had come to that with him.

His past liking for Irena was all forgotten; his thoughts, his heart, his love were all with and for her companion.

Irena saw that with a pang, but she said nothing, only nursed her grief in silence, which was not wholly unmixed with anger against Theodore, and tried to be satisfied with Aylmer's society.

"He is always gentle and good to me," she said to herself, as she sat alone, "but he, too, is engrossed by Leonie. Oh! if only I were beautiful!"

From various causes they delayed visiting the stalactite caves, until Leonie had been with them rather more than a fortnight; and at last Aylmer said it would be well to make a special arrangement to do so, or they would lose the pleasure entirely, as they were leaving in a few days for Clevedon.

So on a bright morning they walked down to the cave, which goes by the name of its proprietor, a certain man yclept Cox; each was provided with a tiny lamp, the guide carrying half-a-dozen of the same fixed on a kind of tray at the end of a pole.

There was a chain passing up some of the chambers, to aid the steps of the uninitiated, and Irena, neglecting to remove her gloves, had them literally worn from her hands by the friction of the links as she grasped them.

She went first with Aylmer, Leonie following with Theodore.

"This is very strange, Miss Templeton!" said the latter. "What wonderful formations these are!" touching a huge stalactite as he spoke.

"Yes," she answered, "and how weird it all is! The lights which scarcely serve to

break the gloom, the chill, damp air, the utter isolation—it is like a scene from the Arabian Nights."

"Or one might imagine we were in the Catacombs!"

The guide here turned.

"Please stoop very low, or your heads will suffer."

And they proceeded in single file, going almost upon "all fours." But emerging into the next chamber they found it very large, and very lofty. The stalactites, too, had formed themselves into all fantastic shapes. There was the parson in the pulpit, a poulterer's shop, a loaf of bread; and, more wonderful still, a number of projections which on being struck lightly with a stick produced all the various notes of a peal of bells.

The guide then proceeded to another chamber in which were little pools of water, giving fine reflections when a lamp was held over their darkness. Leonie was about to follow in Irena's wake when Theodore caught her hand, and arrested her.

Trembling she turned to him, and even in that dim light he saw she was ghastly white.

"I have frightened you," he said, in a whisper; "but why should the knowledge of my love make you afraid?"

"Hush," she said, sharply and tremulously. "You have no right to address me in this way. I cannot listen to you."

"Why?" he questioned, abruptly. "You are more dear to me than I can tell. I have not known you long, it is true, but I love you with all my heart. Will you be my wife, Leonie?"

A bright flush stole to her cheeks, but it died quickly out.

"You do not mean this," she said, tremulously. "Oh! it is cruel to trifle with me! I am so helpless, so altogether at your mercy—an unknown, friendless girl, you rich in all that the world prizes. This is unmanly, Mr. Maxwell."

"You are making yourself unhappy without a cause, Leonie. I love you—I want you for my wife. What answer will you give me, darling?"

Then Aylmer's voice called them, and she snatched her hand from his.

"Let us join them," she said, agitatedly. "You—you have surprised me;" but from her manner Theodore derived hope that his suit would be successful.

He had thrown everything to the winds—all thoughts of friends, and rank, and wealth for her sake—and surely she would not turn a deaf ear to his prayer! He followed her with a comparatively light heart, and contrived by his gay badinage to distract attention from her.

She was heartily glad when they all issued from the cave, and pleading a headache she hastened to the hotel, and up to her own room. Then it was strange that she should fall on her knees, and weep in a quiet, but heart-broken way, and pray in a whisper that Heaven would help her to do the thing that was right? There was no exultation in her heart that she had won an honest man's love, and only bitterest woe in her eyes and in her voice, although she cried again and again,—

"I love him. Oh! how I love him!"

She rose suddenly, and taking a lock of curly brown hair from a tiny case kissed it many times, looked down upon it with fond eyes, and at a pictured face.

"My darling! my darling!" she whispered again, "forgive me. I am a most unhappy woman."

In vain Theodore endeavoured to waylay her that day. She persistently avoided him; would on no account be left with him. He attributed her avoidance to a girl's natural shyness, and never for a moment guessed that she was terribly afraid of herself—that she was not strong enough then to answer, save as her heart dictated.

The next day came, and Mrs. Roswell began to prepare for the journey to Clevedon. Leonie persisted in lightening her labours; packed

the trunks dexterously, and seemed anxious to stay by her. It was not until the evening that Theodore found her alone in the hotel gardens. She turned to re-enter the house, but he stood before her, and barred the way.

"This has gone on long enough, Leonie," he said, firmly. "I have been very patient, but I must have my answer now. Come with me to some place where we can be quiet."

The authority in his voice and manner were not without effect; she moved on by his side mechanically, and they mounted to a natural terrace where were some small and ivy-covered arbours. Selecting one, the furthest removed from the gardens, Theodore motioned her to enter. There were a few folks below, laughing and chatting beside the fountains, but, to all intents and purposes, they were alone. Leonie sank upon the stone seat, her hands clasped tightly about her knees, and her eyes downcast. The young man sat down beside her, and sought to possess himself of her hands, but she was afraid lest his touch should make her weak, and so repulsed him. He heard her quick-drawn breaths, saw the fitful colour come and go in her exquisite face, and his heart beat high with hope.

"Leonie, my darling, what will you say to me?" he questioned.

Her voice was so low when she answered as to be almost inaudible.

"You have honoured me too far, Mr. Maxwell; and you have known me so short a time that you cannot be sure if the feeling you entertain for me is love. It would be base to take advantage of your generosity and implicit trust."

"Not love?" he cried, with a half laugh.

"Why Leonie, you little witch, what else is it that has made my days and nights restless and anxious, filled my thoughts with you, stirred me to keener, quicker life? Love," and he leaned nearer, "what is your reply?"

"You know nothing of me or of my past," she urged lamely.

"I know enough to be sure there is nothing shameful in your life; with that certainty I am content."

How white she was! how hardly she breathed! Below, the fountains tinkled and the little water-fall brawled on; the breath of the mignonette came to them on the soft evening air, and from the cliffs there echoed the sound of gay laughter and merry speech. It seemed to the woman who heard and saw these things that she was going mad. Suddenly she rose, and with a swift gesture that spoke only of despair she said,—

"It cannot be as you wish, Mr. Maxwell, I—I thank you for the honour you have done me, but I cannot marry you. Say no more on the subject, please."

He, too, had risen, and now he grasped her firmly by the wrists, and forced her to look at him.

"I will not accept this repulse," he said as lowly as she herself had spoken, "I love you, and will win you, despite all opposition. I will not believe that you are indifferent to me, Leonie; but why if you love me do you send me away?"

Her voice was broken with sobs, as she answered,—

"You do not understand, and I cannot, dare not, explain. Oh! I pray believe I can never give you any other reply than I now give."

"Do you suppose I will quietly accept this rejection without receiving some valid reason for it? My darling, why will you be so cruel to yourself and me, for I know you love me?"

Below, the waterfall brawled heedlessly on, and the happy lovers bent laughing and whispering over the tinkling fountains. The girl looked out one moment with strange eyes; then suddenly she bows her head and wept as one whose heart is breaking.

"Let me alone," she said; "I love you. Oh! yes, yes! I love you! Be content with that knowledge. Go away! oh, go away! How cruel you are to me!"

He threw his arms about her, and kissed her again and again.

"You have confessed you love me, and I will never let you go. Tell me what obstacle there is in your fancy to our union? My darling heart, nothing can change or kill my passion for you—nothing short of your own actual and personal disgrace."

She shivered, though the flower-laden breeze was so warm.

"Be merciful," she pleaded. "I—I am ill, and in your hands as weak as water; show me some compassion."

He released her.

"I will not press my suit unduly," he said, "I will give you time for reflection. I am going to Clevedon with the Roswells, after that I join my own family. I shall not see you again until November—you shall give me a different answer then."

"Oh!" she wailed, "why will you indulge in foolish hopes? However long you wait—even if until we are both old—I should give you no other reply. Forget the words you have spoken, as I pray you will soon forget me. Why cannot you love a woman your family would approve? Why could you not think of Miss Roswell?"

He flushed slightly at the mention of Irena, but said swiftly,—

"I have chosen once and for all. It is hard (and you must understand that) to wait so long for you, but the thought that you will in the end be my own will make the time seem short. Now, love, kiss me before you leave me—it is not much to ask!"

She hesitated a moment, then went close to him.

"Yes," she said, "I will kiss you now, whilst your heart is tender towards me—kiss you for the first and the last time. Oh! my dear, my dear!—the last, last time!"

She wound her arms about his neck, and drew down his head to her own level. She laid her lips to his then, whilst a bitter sob broke from her. She tried to speak but failed. She clung about him in a very madness of woe, because she knew only too well that this was the only moment in all her life when she might show him her love.

"If ever," she said, faintly, "if ever you learn that of me which shall disappoint and amaze you, and estrange your heart from me, try not to condemn me too bitterly—make allowance for my loneliness and my youth."

"Tell me what you mean by these dark sayings and strange hints," he answered, hoarsely. "Surely, surely you have been guilty of no crime. You, who seem all gentleness, can have wronged no other creature."

"I have wronged no one," wearily; "ask me no more. Now I am going, and I pray you always to remember that as I have given you no encouragement in the past so I give you no hope for the future. I am so placed that I must live and die alone."

Without another word she turned and left him.

Just for a little while a doubt of her goodness and her purity troubled his peace; but the memory of her beautiful face, with its wistful and haunting eyes, upbraided him for his momentary suspicion.

"She is morbid," he thought, "and has known great sorrow, but she is a good woman. Perhaps some of her people may have been guilty of a criminal offence; but what have I to do with them? I shan't marry the aunts and uncles!" with a slight smile, and he did not once despair of eventually winning Leonie to his desire.

That night, when he sat with Aylmer, he broke a short silence by saying,—

"I think it only right to tell you, Roswell, that to-night I asked Miss Templeton to be my wife!"

In the pause that followed Aylmer looked from the window, and but for the dim light Theodore would have seen the pale face had grown paler, and the lips twitched nervously.



"Have you nothing to say?" Theodore questioned, somewhat impatiently.

"What answer did Miss Templeton give you?"

"She refused me emphatically. But I don't despair, because she confessed at the same time she loved me, and her rejection is only caused by some scruples she has concerning her past."

"If it is for her happiness," Aylmer said, slowly and painfully, "that she should marry you I trust you will overrule her scruples."

His voice was so laboured, so heavy, his manner so changed, that Theodore suddenly leaped forward, and laying his hand upon his friend's arm said,—

"Do not let me think I am your rival, old boy!"

"You are not that," steadily, "for I never have had any hope of winning her, but that I love her—yes, that is true."

"I am very sorry," Theodore muttered, feeling how commonplace his words sounded, "but you will get over it, Rossvelt—all men do."

Aylmer smiled.

"Not all men—I am not likely to forget my love or transfer it to any other woman. Talk of something else."

In the morning he and Irena went out across the cliffs, and then Aylmer began to tell her the story he had heard the previous night. He was afraid to look at her, because he knew what feeling she entertained for Theodore.

She heard him very quietly, but now and again a little sob caught her breath, and he saw that her hands were clenched in her effort to stifle her emotion and her pain. When he had finished he touched her gently.

"My dear," he said, "we must comfort each other; for I, too, love her, and he will one day win her for himself. Perhaps it is better so," but he sighed heavily.

"I knew that early or late this blow must fall," Irena said, tremulously, "although I tried to deceive myself with hopes which I knew were delusive; only—only, I could not bear to tell myself the truth. Oh! Aylmer! it is hard that she should have all the good things and I none. We have all played to cross-purposes, and—and the game has not proved pleasant."

Then her eyes flashed, and her voice grew sharper with her pain and her memory of bygone days.

"He did love me once," she cried, bitterly, "and did his best to make her return his affection! How cruel men are—how careless, how they wound us!"

And then, suddenly, her composure deserted her utterly, and she clung, weeping, to his arm.

"I wish I had never seen him! I wish she had never come among us! I was happy until then."

Aylmer soothed her as best he might; and when she had grown calmer said anxiously,—

"You will not allow this to make any difference in your regard for Leonie?"

"You can't expect me to feel any great affection for her, under these circumstances, but I will do my best to hide any change there may be in me from her. It is not her fault (I know) that Theodore has—has deserted me. Oh! that I had one half her beauty!"

"My dear, you are very pretty!"

"Pretty!" scornfully, "in a simple, common-place way way that has failed to please him! Let us go back, Aylmer; I have no heart for anything. It seems as if the world has changed suddenly. I used to find it so pleasant, and now I hate it."

"The pain will grow less with time, my dear. You must be patient."

### CHAPTER III.

EVENTS, which none of them could foresee, kept the Rossvelts and Theodore Maxwell apart until the London season had begun. In the meanwhile life had gone on smoothly (at least apparently so) with them all.

But Leonie was conscious that the affection Irena had once had for her had sunk into indifference, which might in its turn grow into dislike. Mrs. Rossvelt was invariably kind, but she was a woman of little character, and Leonie often thought if Irena chose she could turn her aunt against her.

Aylmer was the only one on whom she could rely for real friendship, real help. His gentle nature, his quiet, unassuming manners won her liking and esteem, and she would have been sorry indeed to forfeit his affection.

She lived a secluded life, seeing very little society; that was her own wish. She had no heart to be gay, to enter into the pleasures and frivolities usually so dear to the young and beautiful; and another consideration was that her wardrobe, though neat and good, was unsuited to any festivity.

Irena often wondered how she spent her very liberal salary, for she seemed to buy no little fineries, did not attempt to replenish her wardrobe.

"She must be of a miserly disposition," thought the girl, a trifle scornfully. "Ah, well, that matters nothing to me."

She did not like the evident mystery in Leonie's life; she wondered why she refused to speak of the last three years, and would only talk freely of her childhood. She longed to know the reason of her sadness—why her wonderful beauty should be marred by melancholy. But she did not dare to ask. Leonie had a way of checking curiosity, and looking down the questioner.

Things were like this when early April came, and one morning Leonie found herself alone with Aylmer in the breakfast-room.

He had been chatting to her in his kindly, pleasant way, when suddenly she turned to him, and said,—

"Why are you always so good to me?"

The answer he made leapt unbidden to his lips.

"It is because I love you, Leonie."

She shrank back from him, a look of pain and fear upon her face. Her strange eyes had deepened and darkened, and she trembled greatly.

"Oh, hush!" she said, "you should not have told me this."

"I was silent," he answered, regarding her wistfully, "I was silent so long that I hoped always to remain so. I must have been mad to tell you what you are to me. But, Leonie, my darling, this shall make no difference to our friendship! I have always loved you, but in such a hopeless fashion that I never dreamed that any reward could be mine. So now let us resume the old friendly relations, or rather, as I cannot be nearer and dearer to you, let me be your brother, your protector, until such time as you go to Maxwell."

"I shall never marry him or any man," she said, steadily. "And, oh! had I known that you would suffer for my most unworthy sake I would have gone away long since!"

"That would not have helped me," smiling sadly. "I loved you from the first. My dear, I should not have spoken to you of my love; but a man cannot always control his impulses, or crush down his passions. So forgive me, dear, and promise not to trust me less. I should like to know that in any trouble you would come to me unhesitatingly for help—that you would feel I could not fail you!"

"Oh, I do feel that," she cried, and catching his hands in hers covered them with her tears and kisses. "I would thank you on my knees for all your goodness, all your love; I would suffer much to prove my gratitude! Heaven bless you!—oh, Heaven bless you!"

She seemed to shiver away from him then, and there was a wild look in the amber eyes. He let her go, and she moved to an open window.

He did not seek to follow her. He stood where she had left him, gazing at her with yearning love. Presently she turned to him.

"Oh, my friend—my friend! what shall I say to you? Tell me, is it pain for you to see me day by day, to meet me at every hour?"

And, oh! if it is so, I will go away, and by absence try to repair the harm I have unwittingly done."

"By so doing you would make my life most miserable. I should reproach myself because I had robbed you of a home and friends. No, my dear, let me look on your face, and hear your voice, anticipate and minister to your wants until you leave my care for Theodore's."

"How unlike a man you are in your unselfishness!" she cried. "Oh! I will be all obedience to your wishes; your pleasure shall be mine!"

He moved towards her, and stood beside her. How fair she was, this woman who was not for him!—and how sad! What misery had he ever seen like to that which darkened her eyes, and shadowed her face!

He took her small ringless hands in his. He held them fast, and as he pressed them in his own he registered a silent vow never to leave or forsake her, never to love her less—to give up his whole life, if need were, to do her service.

Then he stooped and kissed the trembling fingers, and murmured some words that seemed to bless her, and before she could speak in gratitude and thanks he was gone. She sank into a chair, and covered her eyes, and moaned like one in pain.

The sun shone upon the golden glory of her hair, the warm, soft tints of her complexion lit lovingly upon her bowed form; but she seemed unconscious of warmth and light as she crouched there praying and weeping, imploring that Theodore would forget her, for she felt that to refuse him a second time would be almost beyond her strength.

Then she cried on Aylmer. It seemed to her in that hour that he was the beneficent spirit of her life—her guardian angel.

Then she thought of another, who lived by her labour, who was near and dear to her, and had such a just claim upon her love and care.

"It would be best for us both," she said in her heart, "if we were dead. The world is too full of sorrow and wrong to give any heed to ours. I wish we were dead!—oh, with all my soul I wish it!"

Two days later Theodore Maxwell presented himself at Mrs. Rossvelt's town house. He wore the look of a confident wooer, but showed some embarrassment when Irena entered the room where he was.

She, however, quickly relieved his confusion by greeting him in a most matter-of-fact way, and he could not guess that afterwards she went away to weep as if her heart would break.

He did not see Leonie until the following day, when Aylmer contrived they should be alone. There was such evident fear in her eyes that he said,—

"I shall not press you for an answer to-day; it would be unfavourable."

She made a gesture of weariness.

"You have not forgotten, Mr. Maxwell?"

"I told you I should not. I do not easily change; and I know that as you loved me once you love me now. Why are you so afraid of me?"

"I am not afraid of you, but of myself. You are so strong, I am so weak, and all my heart cries out for you. But, oh! believe me that, if you wait a lifetime, I will give you no answer different to the one I gave at Cheddar."

"I am not fainthearted; I can wait and hope."

Then Mrs. Rossvelt entered, and there was no further opportunity for speech.

Two or three days wore by, and then Theodore had occasion to go to Stoke Newington. He had transacted his business and was walking towards the Dalston Junction when he saw a figure before him which looked strangely like Leonie.

He hastened his steps and strove to overtake the girl; he caught the gleam of golden hair underneath the large black hat, and felt assured none but Leonie could boast such

rippling masses. He was surprised to see her in the neighbourhood, but glad to think he would have her to himself for a time. And just when he was so sure of overtaking her she paused a moment at a door, then, opening it, disappeared.

He was bewildered; Leonie had no friends, what was she doing here? The house was small, but neat and clean. He walked up and down a long while, but the girl he had followed did not reappear; and at last he persuaded himself he was mistaken, and taking train returned to the more fashionable quarter of London.

He went at once to the Rossells, and was there told that Leonie had been out two or three hours. His heart sank with undefined fear.

He would have been considerably astonished could he have seen how she was employed at that very hour. She was sitting on a rug before a fire in a small room; one arm was thrown about a beautiful boy, apparently between two and three years old; with her right hand she was building up a house of bricks. A little removed from them sat an old woman, looking on with sad and pitying eyes.

"He grows, Miss Leonie, doesn't he?" she said, after a pause.

"Yes; and he is so bright and bonny. Oh, nurse, nurse! if he were only like other children! He is so beautiful, so winning, he should be happy. But there is no such thing as happiness in this world."

"Poor child!" said the old woman, leaning forward and smoothing Leonie's hair with tender hand. Poor child! you have found it hard enough."

The girl seemed not to heed her; she suddenly caught the boy in her arms and kissed him many times.

"Oh, Lenny, Lenny! my darling, my poor darling! Bailey, he knows me only as the 'pretty lady'; and when he grows up perhaps he will hate me."

"No, no, my pretty one; that can never be. Cheer up, Miss Leonie, there must be better times before you; and one day Lenny will be a comfort to you. Oh, that your poor father had lived!"

"I say that to myself a hundred times a day; and mamma, dear mamma, who never gave me a harsh word. Oh! thank Heaven she died before—before—"

"Say no more, love; I understand what you mean."

Leonie felt the pressure of two small arms about her neck, and a little warm face laid against her cheek.

"Why do you cry? Is he ill?" asked Master Lenny in his childish voice.

Leonie lifted his face between her hands and looked intently into it.

"I am not ill, darling, only very sorry because I must leave you soon." She turned her beautiful eyes towards Bailey; "Look at him well, Bailey; thank Heaven there is not a trace of his father in him. Oh! if I thought he would live to follow his vices, break some woman's heart, and leave her to her shame—as his father did—as his father did!—I think I could kill him now and here, despite his loveliness and winsome ways. Now, Lenny, let me put away the bricks and undress you; it is time for bed."

And then she took him on her knees and her bright hair mingled with his dark curls.

When she had taken off and folded his clothes she bade him kneel down, and lifting his tiny hands between her own, murmured the words of a childish prayer, which he repeated in a small, clear treble.

Then she lifted him in her arms, and carried him upstairs, where was a dainty white cot. She laid him in it, and, kissing him many times, turned away weeping quietly.

Downstairs she regained her calmness, and, taking out her purse, tendered Mrs. Bailey some money.

The old woman drew back with a hurt look.

"Why will you always insist upon paying me,

Miss Leonie, for what is a labour of love? I have enough for his wants and for mine."

Leonie shook her head.

"You must keep to my terms, nurse, or I must place him elsewhere; and then I should fret bitterly, not knowing how he would be treated. Now, good-bye, and I will come again as soon as I dare. Oh! Heaven bless you for all your kindness."

Then they kissed each other, and Leonie left the house, hastening away in the direction of Dalston Junction.

It was almost dark when she reached the Rossells, and a cold rain had begun to fall sharply; tired and wet, she crept away to her room, meeting Mrs. Rossell on the stairs.

"You are very late, Miss Templeton?" she said, in a tone of mild rebuke. "Aylmer has been anxious about you. Please make haste down, as we are waiting dinner."

Leonie ran away, and presently appeared in the dining-room, pale but composed. Her eyes were very weary, her voice languid, and Aylmer, leaning towards her, said,—

"You have exerted yourself too greatly. Another day, when you wish to take a long excursion, you must have the carriage out."

The tears sprang to her eyes, and she could not look at him.

"Oh," she said, faintly, "I don't deserve such kindness and consideration, but it is pleasant to receive it."

"Aylmer," said Irena, "Mr. Maxwell came here this afternoon. He says his cousin is about to return home, and he hopes to bring him here next week. He has been absent from England five years."

"If his cousin resembles Theodore he will find much favour with us."

The next morning Theodore presented himself again at the house, and had a few moments *à-tête-à-tête* with Leonie.

"I was at Stoke Newington yesterday," he said, watching her intently.

The hot colour leapt to her face, but she merely remarked that it was a "growing place," and continued her work.

"You speak as though you had some acquaintance with the suburb?"

"I am not wholly ignorant of it," and then she met his eyes steadily.

Surely, he thought, despite her mysterious manner, she had nothing of moment to conceal. So he said, airily,—

"By-the-by, I started yesterday on a wild-goose chase. Going to the Junction I saw before me a lady, whose figure and carriage made me for a time imagine she was you. I followed her, but she disappeared into a small house."

Just a slight pause, then Leonie said, quietly,—

"I think you were not mistaken. I went to Stoke Newington in the afternoon to visit some friends."

"I thought I understood you had no friends?"

"That being the case you should congratulate me upon the fact that I am not wholly desolate," she remarked, carelessly.

And she knew when she looked into his face that her candour had helped her more than any subterfuge would have done, and that his old trust in her was restored.

But when he was gone, and she was alone again, she hid her face upon her work, and cried out that she was a wicked woman, and a hypocrite, and prayed for strength to fight out the battle before her.

The days wore by slowly, and Theodore did not come again until a week had passed. Leonie was unfeignedly thankful for the respite his absence gave her from wearing conflicts and fears.

It seemed to her sometimes that her courage and resolution must break down, and then she would think would it not be best to leave the shelter of Aylmer's roof, to go away to some place where they could never find her again; only at the last her heart would fail her because of Lenny, so she stayed.

One day, when she had been on a shopping

expedition for Mrs. Rossell, she met Irena issuing from the house.

"What a pity you were absent this morning?" the latter said, a trifle maliciously. "Mr. Maxwell has been here with his cousin; the former seemed disappointed at finding you not at home."

Leonie ignored her last words, and questioned, carelessly,—

"Does the latter realise your expectations?"

"Yes, and no. He is undeniably handsome, but I dislike him," and she passed on.

There was no confidence between the girls, so that during the day neither referred to either Theodore or his cousin; but when they were all sitting in the dusky drawing-room that evening Aylmer said, suddenly,—

"Mother, I've invited a couple of friends to dine with us to-morrow. I hope you have no other engagement?"

"Oh, no. And who are your friends, my dear?"

"Only Maxwell and Fergus Darrell. By the way, Irena, the latter admires you greatly."

There came a low but exceedingly bitter cry from Leonie's distant corner; it startled them all, and when it was followed by a sob, Aylmer started forward.

"Leonie—Miss Templeton—are you ill?"

"Yes, yes," and she staggered to her feet, her hand pressed hard against her side. "Do not touch me, don't speak, let me go to my room."

Oh, the anguish in her lovely voice! Oh, the agony on the white face not even the gloaming could hide!

She tried to reach the door, but trembled so greatly she seemed about to fall. Aylmer passed his arm about her, and helped her on her way. Outside her room he paused. She offered him no thanks, only shrank away, with her hand upon the latch.

"I will send Mrs. Rossell to you," he said. "I am afraid you are very ill; you must really have advice."

She forced a smile.

"No, no; to-morrow I shall be well. It is only an old—a very old pain. Don't trouble Mrs. Rossell to come up—I am best alone;" so she went in and closed the door behind her. When the sound of his steps had died away she threw herself upon her bed, and set her teeth hard to keep down the shrieks that rose from her heart, and sought to escape her lips.

She rolled and writhed in her lonely anguish, and at first could find no word to say, no prayer to pray. She looked her future in the face and saw that it was evil; but even in that hour, when a voice whispered within her that the time would soon come when Theodore should hate and despise her as then he loved her, her thoughts turned to Lenny, the little one, who was so helpless without her.

At last she sat up, and pushed the heavy hair from her brow.

"Oh!" she said, in an intense whisper. "he has found me—he, my enemy and Lenny's! Oh, is my sin so great there is no forgiveness for me?—no peace or joy in all the days to come? Heaven have mercy upon me!" and, moaning, she hid her face in her hands. "Oh!" she murmured, "that I should hate him now as once I loved him! He is cruel and false; but surely, surely, for the sake of the old days and because of the evil he has wrought, he will keep my secret, and not drive me from my pleasant home!"

Then she thought of the days in the long ago past when she had been afraid of her own happiness; when she had worshipped the man she now loathed and feared; when she had been his love, his slave, waiting upon his every look and gesture with mute and tender observance.

Oh, the irony of fate! that the man she had loved and the man she now loved should be connected, by ties of blood, and that even friendship between herself and Theodore was now impossible!



She began to wonder if the Rossvells suspected the reason of her sudden indisposition, and how long it would be before they heard her story, and drove her with scorn from their midst!

She need not have feared; her friends did not connect her illness with the mention of Fergus Darrell's name. Mrs. Rossvell only said "it was a great pity Miss Templeton was so very delicate;" and, whilst Aylmer thought yearningly of her, she knelt in her silent room, her lips pressed close to Lenny's pictured face, her tears falling fast on that "one little lock of hair!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

THE next day she lived in terror. Early in the morning she despatched a note to Mrs. Bailey, telling her briefly what had happened.

"MY DEAR NURSE.—He is in England, and has been introduced to my employer; he dines here to-day. If he discloses my secret there will be nothing left for me to do but to return to you, until I can get work elsewhere. I will not trouble you by telling you of my misery; but, oh! as you love me, pray for me. Kiss my darling for me, and believe me always your grateful child, "LEONIE."

Day wore to evening, and the dining-room was ablaze with lights. Leonie had tried to excuse herself from appearing, but Mrs. Rossvell seemed so vexed that she dared not press the point. So she went down first, hoping Fergus Darrell would enter alone, and his surprise at meeting her in this house be un-  
witnessed by any.

A false or careless step now might ruin her for ever.

She looked very pale, but not less lovely. Her dress was of a thin, dull black material, and she wore no ornaments, no flowers. In her strange eyes there was a great despair, an almost overwhelming dread. She moved wearily to a window, and sat down, shielding her face with her hands.

Then Mrs. Rossvell entered with Theodore, and Leonie shivered, wondering what would be the end; then came Aylmer, followed by Irena and a tall, fair, handsome man, with eyes like purple hyacinths. She sat still, hardly daring to breathe; wishing passionately that the ordeal was over, and she knew her fate.

"Oh! Mr. Darrell," said Irena's soft voice, "I must introduce you to Miss Templeton," and she drew him towards Leonie. As she uttered the name he gave a little involuntary start, and Irena said, "Of course Mr. Maxwell was spoken to you of her—she will seem no stranger."

"Of course," he answered, with the ready assurance of a man of the world, "and I shall be very glad to meet the lady;" but his eyes gave the lie to his words, only Irena was not looking into them.

As they drew near her, Leonie rose; her wonderful face was as white as the lilies Irena wore, and one hand hung clenched at her side, but, as they looked steadily each into the other's face, she bowed and forced herself to smile. He made some commonplace, courteous remark, and then they took their seats.

"What a dandily plucky girl she is," thought Fergus Darrell, with grudging admiration, "but she must be removed from here. Jealousy plays curious pranks with women, and I don't intend she should spoil my running with little Irena. What a pretty child she is!—and it's high time I married, and settled down on my estate."

Then he turned to Irena and began to talk well and brilliantly, although the young lady gave him scanty encouragement, having conceived a violent dislike to him. He was handsome, witty, wealthy, but she detected a false ring in his voice, something insincere in his smile; and he had nothing good to say of any creature he chose to discuss. Once, lifting her eyes to his, she said,—

"You are very uncharitable, I fear, Mr.

Darrell. I should not like you to criticise me."

"To you I should be a most lenient critic, even had you many faults," and he said it in a tone that implied she had none.

Anxious to turn the conversation into another channel she asked,—

"And may I ask your opinion of Miss Templeton? Don't you consider her beauty perfect?"

He gave her a little startled glance, but finding she had spoken in all innocence he answered, with a drawl,—

"Amber eyes, yellow hair, and a brunette complexion are scarcely good in conjunction. No, I most distinctly do not like her;" and yet only three years ago he thought her the loveliest of all the maidens of Madrid, had had no rest until he learned her name, and where she lived—until he had made the poor, helpless, innocent child his abject slave!

Did no thought of the past, in which he had played so cruel and vile a part, come to torment him as he sat looking on the face he had made sad—the woman whose life he had wholly blighted?

No, no—he lived only for self; and when he had grown weary of Leonie he longed for freedom, and hated her. Now it seemed to him she stood between him and possible happiness, and he hated her the more. Oh! the shame of it!—the shame of it! That he should have no ruth on the broken heart, and the spoiled life!

Irena spoke again.

"I am sorry you do not admire her, as Mr. Maxwell hopes one day to make her his wife!"

"What! He would never be such a fool? I mean—I beg your pardon and hers; but with Theodore's advantages he might do so much better. What does he know of her former life?"

"None of us know very much more than that she is an orphan and friendless. Aylmer was the means of introducing her to us."

"Then she is a *protegee* of his? How extremely interesting!" Fergus Darrell said, with a half-concealed sneer. "Hae, he too, fallen a victim to her many charms?"

Irena flushed slightly; she did not like his tone.

"There would be small wonder if he did, seeing she is as accomplished as she is beautiful, and has a sweet disposition too, though melancholy."

"You praise generously, Miss Rossvell," he said, looking into the soft brown eyes. "Do you know I am wondering how Theodore could be so blind as not to see your loveliness, and covet it for himself?"

"Mr. Darrell, your compliments are very fulsome," she remarked, coldly. "They border on ill-taste," and she turned a very flushed face upon him.

She certainly was very pretty then in an almost infantile way, and the admiration Darrell felt for her increased. He had always been courted and made much of by the women; and that this little girl should evince a dislike to him was a new experience, and he was determined to overcome it. With such men as he opposition only inflames, and not unfrequently endows the object of their so-called love with many fabulous virtues and graces. You see, it is only possession which robs a thing of its worth.

But there was Leonie to be thought of, and she might prove a formidable enemy, might frustrate all his plans. Yes, at any risk she must be removed. He fancied he knew her character thoroughly, and remembering all her love, all her devotion, told himself that even did he disclose her secret to the Rossvells she would hold her peace concerning his share in that old story of wrong and deceit. He must see her and make conditions with her. She should leave her present home, and hold no intercourse with those who had so long befriended her. The alternative would be exposure. So when, looking round later in the evening, he did not see her in the room, he rose and went to the little conservatory,

hoping to find her there. Instinct guided him aright; Leonie was sitting in a drooping attitude, her chin sunk upon her bosom.

Hearing his step she looked up, then rose and stood white and rigid, waiting for him to join her. In the glance he gave her she read only hate and aversion, and a shudder passed over her. Involuntarily she clenched her hands and set her teeth, for she knew the man's nature too well to credit him with mercy.

"I want to speak to you. Can we be alone here?" he asked, icily. She merely bowed, not daring to trust her voice.

"I was disagreeably surprised to meet you again, and here of all places," he began, and she interrupted in swift, low tones,—

"The meeting is not of my seeking. I should wish the whole world to be between us. What can you have to say to me after three long years of silence and neglect?"

"I've no time to waste in reproaches and no inclination. Is it true what the Rossvells say, that Theodore wishes to marry you?"

"It is true," with a flush of triumph in the midst of her humiliation.

"That shall never be. You shall not sully his name or sit in the place where now his mother reigns. You have forfeited all right to his love, all right to such a position as he could lift you to."

She winced under his words, but answered steadily,—

"You do well, Fergus Darrell, to remind me of these things, but it is like you, as I learned too late. But do you remember so little of me that you can believe I would unite my lot with his—hide my disgrace under cover of his name? I love him, as once I dreamed I loved you. I love him a thousandfold more passionately than he does me, but I will not marry him."

He laughed sardonically.

"That you certainly will not. I would not allow it. Of course if he chose to do so, after hearing your story, he would do it at his own risk; but I know him well enough to be sure that he would never marry a woman who has been what you were."

Even her lips were white, but she said, steadily,—

"What is it you want of me?"

"I insist that you leave the Rossvells with all possible speed, and without telling them anything of the past. I don't suppose you are proud of it. I intend making Irena Rossvell my wife, consequently you must feel your companionship is the last I should desire for her."

"I am earning an honest livelihood. If I leave here I must starve or eat the bread of charity; I will do neither. The time has long gone by when I was your slave, obeying your every whim, and believing you could do no wrong. So I elect to stay, but I will say nothing of what has past, as much for my sake as yours."

"You defy me?" he cried, in suppressed tones. "You will do well to reconsider your decision; remember I can ruin you utterly."

"In doing so you will injure your own cause. Oh! show me some mercy, some pity, for the sake of the love you once professed for me—for the sake of my little child."

She drooped low then, and put up her hands to hide the shame upon her face.

"The child lives then?" he questioned, harshly.

"Yes, and thank Heaven grows each day less like you."

"You are complimentary, madam. Pray may I ask what you have done with the delectable infant?"

"What other women in my position are compelled to do."

He stood silent a moment, then said,—

"Look here, Leonie, you know very well what manner of man I am; that I will have my desires gratified at any cost, that I never forgive the man or woman who thwarts them. You know, too, I can do you incalculable harm, which must reach the child too. You

had best go away. I will recompense you for the loss of your situation. I fancy a hundred pounds would do that handsomely. Do you accept?"

"No, I do not," she said, in a sudden flash of terrible anger. "Go your way, and I will go mine; I will not molest you by word or deed. I ask nothing of you, and will I concede nothing; and be careful how you act towards me in the future, because I am a desperate woman, and might take such terrible revenge upon you as you cannot dream."

She had drawn near to him, her eyes blazing, her nostrils dilated, her lips quivering.

"Tigress!" he said, with bitter scorn; "what possible harm could you do me? Your revenge would only recoil upon yourself. A word from me will lose you your lover, and the esteem of the immaculate Aylmer; will make you an outcast and a creature for all honest women to loathe and shun. Go your way; run on to the end of your tether, and then acknowledge, when ruin comes, that it would have been well to accede to my demands."

He turned and left her, and she watched him go with burning hate in her heart, and a passionate determination to hold her own against him to the bitter end.

There was little Lenny to be considered, and Bailey's income was so small that, without the addition of Leonie's salary, the child at times might suffer privations. So for two reasons she elected to stay on, although she went in fear and trembling lest each day should be her last in this quiet home, where she had found so much kindness.

It added not a little to her burden that Theodore was now a constant visitor, that he spoke and looked his love so openly that it was palpable to all. At such moments it seemed to her she must cry out or go mad; and all the while she knew those cruel purple eyes were bent upon her in strong disfavour and contempt.

Fergus Darrell made no progress in his wooing, and he attributed his non-success to Leonie's influence with Irena. He really loved the latter, as much as was possible to a man of his inordinately selfish character, and he determined to have his revenge upon Leonie, to draw her away, so that she should not poison Irena's mind against him.

False and suspicious himself, he would not even credit Irena's statement (in reply to his questionings) that Leonie had never spoken of him; and he began to insinuate that Miss Templeton was not all she seemed. He treated her with scant courtesy, and hinted she was an unfit companion for "one so pure and good as Miss Roswell."

To do Irena justice, she strove to disbelieve all these things, and to continue on friendly terms with Leonie; but the leaven of Darrell's malice was working all too well, both upon Irena and her aunt, and Leonie was not slow to notice the growing coldness of their manner, and, noticing it, to agitate herself with doubts and fears.

Sometimes Fergus waylaid her, always with the same request, and always receiving the same answer. He had not expected this resolution in her, because in the old days she had been so subservient; but then he had loved her, or had professed to do so, which is much the same thing with a large majority of men; and she—well, she had simply worshipped him, being young and innocent—and, oh! so easily deceived by his sophistries. Now she hated him, and in that lay the whole gist of the matter.

One day, finding her alone, he said, roughly,—"How much longer is this state of affairs to go on? My patience is nearly exhausted."

She smiled bitterly.

"It is for you to say how long you will persecute me, make my days terrible, and my nights sleepless, because of shame and fear. If you mean how long shall I remain here, I answer, until you drive me away. For your own sake you will not do that."

He laughed coarsely.

"Nothing you may say or do can injure me, you fool. I have nothing to lose; you have everything."

"I lost all I cared for, all I prized, long ago," she answered, despairingly. "Are you not content with your work? Love, and joy, and honour are not for me. You stole away all that should have been mine, and now you would take from me the very means of livelihood."

"I told you," he said, coarsely, "I would recompense you for that. Long before the money was gone you would have obtained employment elsewhere. You had really, for your own sake, better go."

"I suppose I ought to thank you for your advice, but I do not, neither shall I act upon it. You must remember good advice is rarely accepted."

He ignored her last words.

"You have contrived to prejudice Miss Roswell against me. I am not likely to forgive or forget that fact."

"You are wrong," Leonie said, calmly; "I have never spoken of you to her. Your name is so loathsome to me I could not breathe it."

"You think I am fool enough to believe you innocent. Pardon me, I am too well acquainted with woman's nature to be so easily duped."

"You fancy you understand women, but you don't; although, indeed, you should, having always done your best to win their hearts by way of amusement, so that you might have the pleasure of breaking them. There are many men like you; you are not unique by any means."

Then they were interrupted, but her words and her looks lingered with him, and goaded him on to a very delirium of madness. That evening he accompanied the Roswells to the opera, and in his heart he determined that before he left Irena he would know his fate.

Leonie was not of the party, for which he was unfeignedly glad. Her presence (bad as he was) always embarrassed him, and he wished to be quite at his ease, when he should honour Irena with the offer of his hand.

He hardly knew what passed through the long hours; all the liquid sweetness of the *prima donna's* voice was lost to him; he was deaf to the wonderful notes of the first tenor, and all through the drive home a voice cried in his ears, "Irena" and "Leonie," "Leonie" and "Irena."

Miss Templeton had gone to her own room, so the four—Mrs. Roswell and Aylmer, Irena and Fergus—sat down to supper together. When it was ended—Aylmer moved to the piano, and began to play an air from *Il Trovatore*. Mrs. Roswell fell asleep in her chair, so Fergus begged Irena to go with him into the conservatory. She scarcely knew how to refuse his request, so she went with him, unwillingly enough. He found her a seat, and took up a position by her, looking passionately down upon her blushing face.

"Miss Roswell," he said, "you must know why I have brought you here?" and as she made no reply, only blushed more deeply, he took courage to add, "It is to tell you that I love you more than any poor words of mine can say. It is to ask you to take pity upon me, and end my suspense. Irena, my darling Irena, what will you say to me?"

"Oh, Mr. Darrell," she answered, very much fluttered, "I did not think—I did not guess—that—that—"

"That is a subterfuge," he said, sharply, "and unworthy of you. You knew very well what hopes I entertained regarding you. My dear," growing tender again, "give me my answer, and for my love's sake let it be favourable!"

"I am very sorry," she began, "but—but I am afraid I must give you pain. I do not care for you as you wish—I am even indifferent to you. Pray forgive me, and try to think no more of me."

"It is easy to say forget me, but I should find it impossible to obey you. I love you, and will marry no other woman. Tell me, Irena,

has Miss Templeton prejudiced you against me?"

"No," she answered, wonderingly; "she never speaks of you, and we are not on confidential terms. Why should you ask that?"

"Because she is my enemy," he said, tersely; then added, "You have refused my love now, but I will not think my suit hopeless, I will ask you again and again until, despite yourself, you answer as I would have you. Now let me take you back to the others;" he stooped and kissed her, despite all her remonstrances, then led her back to Aylmer and her aunt.

The next morning, early, he again presented himself, bringing Theodore with him; the latter looked anxious and depressed, for Fergus had told him on the way that he had a disclosure to make which would not redound to Miss Templeton's credit, and which would certainly destroy any love he (Theodore) might entertain for her.

Entering the room where Mrs. Roswell and Aylmer sat, he greeted the former with courteous gravity.

"Madam, I have come on a painful errand; it is connected with the young person in your employ, 'Miss Leonie Templeton.' She is not a fit companion for Miss Roswell."

## CHAPTER V.

AYLMER started impetuously to his feet.

"Whatever you have to say of Miss Templeton must be said in her presence."

"That is precisely what I wish, but I would ask that Miss Roswell should be absent; the story is unfit for her ears," said Fergus, very smoothly.

"It is a lie!" broke in Aylmer, whose most unwonted excitement caused Mrs. Roswell great surprise, and elicited from her the gentle remonstrance,—

"My dear, my dear, you are forgetting the courtesy due to a guest."

"No, I am not; and I may say now I am surprised Maxwell should stand calmly by whilst another man traduces the woman he loves. Ring the bell, mother; Irena shall be present to give her countenance and support to Miss Templeton. Gentlemen, be seated," and he moved from them to a little distance, where he stood grave and stern, with head slightly bent.

Irena came in first, a trifle nervous and confused; then they all waited Leonie's entrance. When Mrs. Roswell's message reached her she knew the blow had fallen, and for a moment meditated flight; but then she reflected that in her absence Fergus could malign her as he chose, and there would be none to defend her. So after a pause she went slowly downstairs, and entered the room. She felt that after this hour she should see no more.

All eyes were turned upon her as she advanced to the centre. Aylmer stepped forward and placed a chair for her, saying, gently,—

"Don't be alarmed; we have implicit faith in you."

She remained standing, her hands loosely clasped before her, her head bent low.

Fergus glanced at her with a look of malicious triumph. Even now, when he was about to strike her so cruel a blow, he did not believe she would say aught against him, knowing well her almost quixotic generosity.

He began to speak in smooth, suave tones.

"It is my painful duty to inform you, Mrs. Roswell, that Miss Templeton is unfit to fill her present position; and you, Theodore, that no man with any vestige of manly spirit would make her his wife!"

There was a dead silence, but Leonie never looked up, only seemed to droop more, as though she fain would hide her face from them all.

"Three years ago," continued Fergus, "she was living at Madrid with a man whom she then called husband, but she has no claim



upon him—she was his mistress. She is a mother, but not a wife.”

Theodore uttered a loud cry, and sprang to her side.

“Leonie,” he implored, passionately, “say it is not true. Oh! my love, my dear love, give him the lie!”

She lifted her eyes then, marked the shuddering repulsion on the faces of Mrs. Roswell and Irena. Aylmer she could not see—he had half-hidden himself among the curtains, and averted his face—then she said, dully,—

“It is true, and there stands the partner of my guilt!” pointing to Fergus.

A murmur of horror passed through the room. Theodore fell back from her, and for a moment seemed as if he would spring upon his cousin who, in the dismay and confusion occasioned by Leonie’s words, was speechless. The girl broke the silence by saying, in the same dull voice,—

“Hear my story, so that when you most condemn you may most pity me. It seems to me that I have been more sinned against than sinning, but, then, I am incapable of judging my own conduct impartially. My mother, who was the daughter of the Duke of Alvin, died when I was very young, and I lived almost alone with my father. I was nearly sixteen. Then the cholera began to rage in Madrid, and it swept off hundreds, my father and then only surviving relatives being among the victims.

“After his death it was found his affairs were hopelessly involved, and nothing remained for me. Then some old servants, who had taken a small hotel, came forward and offered me a home, which I gladly accepted. But I soon found life was a misery in that place; I was the drudge, the scapegoat. I had innumerable tasks to perform, and among them was ministering to the want of the boarders. One day a new visitor came; his name was Fergus Darrell, and in those days he was very good to me. He told me he had seen me often in the streets, and longed to know me, but there had been no one to effect an introduction, and by mere chance he had discovered my home.

“I was so young, so miserable,” she said, a pathetic break in her voice, “I was so innocent of the world and its ways, the duplicity of men, that I believed all he said implicitly; and when he told me he loved me, and would take me away where I might be happy, my passionate love and gratitude grew to worship, and I could have given up my life for him. He told me of years spent wholly together, and how he would never weary of me in any day to come. Oh! remember, remember how mere a child I was! I listened to his sophistries. I believed him when he said in the sight of Heaven, because we loved each other truly, we were man and wife. So I left my wretched home for one he had made beautiful for me. It was like that in which I had spent my happy childhood, and with him I loitered through the rooms, or lingered in the orange groves. My joy was so great it was almost pain, and I had no thought of sin. I met the glance of men and women freely, being proud he had chosen me from all the world beside.”

She lifted her head a moment, and met Mrs. Roswell’s condemning eyes. Aylmer still stood apart from them all; Fergus glared upon her, but Theodore had his face bowed between his hands. She went on, with a quiver of pain in her voice,—

“That life lasted nearly a year, and then I saw a change in him, slight at first, but growing day by day, until I knew he did not love me, and then it seemed my heart would break. I strove by every means in my power to win him back; I put forth all my little accomplishments, but vainly. Then I passionately implored him to tell me my fault, that so I might remedy it; and he—oh! Heaven, he told me such unkind things as ours ended always in disgust, and showed me what I was. At first I scarcely understood, but when the full knowledge of my shame came upon me, I fell at his feet, and prayed him to kill me.

“He left me with an oath; and then I must have fainted, for I knew nothing more until I woke to find myself alone. He had gone, leaving no trace behind. I must have been mad. I put together a few things, and, selling my ornaments, started for England, believing that I should find him; almost trusting that after all he had spoken falsely, and that the law would help me to my rights. I reached London, a friendless, almost penniless, stranger; and whilst I was wandering miserably about the streets I had the good fortune to meet my old nurse. She had married a pilot, but was then a widow, living on a small annuity. She took me home with her, and after a few days my baby was born. Oh! Why must I tell you these things? Is not my shame too heavy to be borne without this awful exposure?”

No one spoke, no one moved, and she went on, drearily,—

“When I looked on my baby’s face, and knew he had no father, I cursed the man who had made me what I was, and placed a brand on my innocent child’s brow. When I was well enough I sought and obtained employment. The rest of my life was uneventful until I went to Cheddar. Oh! breaking suddenly down, “have compassion on me! If I kept my secret, who would blame me? I knew too well that a man may sin again and again, and not be the less esteemed; I also knew that the woman who makes one false step is utterly condemned, irretrievably ruined! There is one law for the tempter, another for the tempted.”

She ceased, and then Theodore’s voice, hoarse and strange, sounded through the room,—

“I will never forgive you that you won my love—that you have made life miserable for me. Each day the passion I had for you will become more resolved into hate!”

“Stay!” she cried, in heartrending tones; “have I not left you free? Oh! for Heaven’s sake, speak kindly to me now!—for the last time!”

He turned from her with a muttered imprecation.

Fergus said, sullenly,—

“You have heard what this woman says? Her story is a tissue of truth and falsehood. And, after all, my fault is one common to men.”

“True,” rejoined Aylmer, speaking for the first time; then he moved to the unhappy woman, and, despite his mother’s remonstrance, before them all he took her slender hands in his and said, clearly, “My dear, I do not hold you guilty. To me you will always be a wronged woman, and one deserving not only pity, but love; and if”—here he paused, and flashed a glance upon them all—“if my heart can content you, it is yours to-day and for ever; if my loving care can teach you forgetfulness of what has gone before, it shall never be withdrawn. Leonie, will you make me happy by being my wife?”

There was a fierce outcry, and a shrill scream from the other women, but Leonie saw nothing but this one generous man, heard no sound but his voice.

She lifted her eyes to his, and then all her hardly-kept composure broke down; and, flinging herself on her knees, she kissed his hands, and wept as if her heart would break, but more in passionate gratitude than from any other emotion, because his tender love and faith filled her whole soul with a desire to do something by which she could prove how deeply she felt his goodness.

Fergus Darrell looked down contemptuously at her, smiled scoffingly as his eyes glanced from her to Aylmer standing with bowed head and loving, anxious face, so full of pity—it seemed as an angel’s. Then he said,—

“Pretty, but decidedly theatrical!”

“Will you marry me, Leonie? Get up, my dear, this is no position for you.”

She obeyed his bidding, as she would any bidding of his now, and she answered, tremulously,—

“Your goodness kills my pride, and weighs down my very soul with a burden of gratitude, but I will not hide my shame under your honest name. Let me go now; I can bear no more.”

“I shall still hope,” he said, with grave tenderness, and so released her.

She walked towards the door, on her way pausing before Mrs. Roswell.

“You are a woman,” she said, simply, “and should feel some pity for me; remember I was alone and in misery. I was so very, very young.”

“You were not too young to distinguish between right and wrong,” coldly.

She sighed heavily, and went on her way. Irena drew her skirts close lest they should touch this poor pariah, and so be contaminated. She and her aunt were good and virtuous women, but they were pitiless; they had never been tempted, and so had no compunction for the fallen.

Theodore held the door open for Leonie, and as she passed through she lifted her weary eyes to his.

“Forgive me?” she pleaded; “the wrong I did you was a small one, and not irremediable. You will forget me soon, and be happy with some other. All men forget more or less easily.”

“I shall never forget and never forgive. I shall curse your name to my dying day!” he answered, fiercely, and without a word she passed on and heavily upstairs.

“Life is over with me,” she muttered, brokenly. I have got my death-blow, and but for Lenny I would say thank Heaven. Oh! my heart, my broken heart, my soiled, degraded life!”

When she had left them, Aylmer turned upon the other men.

“Maxwell, I am disappointed in you; Darrell, I must request you to leave my house at once; your presence is an insult to my mother and cousin.”

“I have only sinned as many a man has done before me, and you must be infatuated to believe all that woman says. I will not go until I have spoken to Miss Roswell. Irena, give me five minutes alone that I may justify myself to you, as far as I am able.”

“What you have to say to me you can say here,” haughtily; “and I should imagine justification would be impossible. I can grant you no private interview.”

Seeing that it was useless to plead with her Fergus Darrell said, desperately,—

“It must be as you wish, but I will not go in silence. I believed I was fond of Leonie Templeton in a fashion, but I swear I have never loved any woman but you. Last night I asked you to be my wife, now I repeat my request. Will you consent?”

“No, Mr. Darrell; for if I condemn her I hold you doubly guilty. Your protestations of love offend me, and I trust we shall never meet again.”

He muttered something ugly below his breath, then turning to his cousin said, insolently,—

“I will talk to these people when they have recovered their reason. Come, Theodore.”

“Not with you,” fiercely. “Let me be; I am in a murderous mood.”

“As you please,” with ill-assumed nonchalance; “but it seems to me very foolish for old friends to quarrel over a fallen woman—a pariah.”

In all her life Irena had never seen such a look of loathing and rage as flashed over Aylmer’s face then.

“Go,” he cried, with a menacing gesture; “this house never before harboured a profligate and libertine.”

And Fergus Darrell went from their midst. Theodore followed shortly after, and Aylmer was left with his mother and cousin; the former began to speak volubly.

“What possessed you to speak to that—that woman as you did? Do you suppose for an instant I would countenance her presence here, or receive her as my daughter? You must be

mad to contemplate such an alliance. Fergus Darrell's deserted mistress—

"Hush!" he said, so sternly that she was frightened; "you forget her wrongs. How cruel you women are to each other! I tell you candidly, mother, if at any future time she will listen to me I will make her my wife, and esteem myself a happy man."

"You will not expect me to visit you," Irena remarked, coldly. "A virtuous woman cannot countenance vice."

Leonie lay upon the couch in Mrs. Bailey's little room; Lenny played quietly in a corner with a few cards, a broken doll, and a horse without a tail.

It was August, and through all the weary weeks which had passed since she left the Rossvells she had grown weaker, paler, thinner, the very ghost of herself, but beautiful still, in a pathetic way that brought the tears to Nurse Bailey's eyes each time she looked upon her.

"Nurse," said the faint, sweet voice, "I should like to go to Cheddar. Doctor Somers said Hastings, but I don't want to hear the swish of the waves, or look each day on the wide expanse of water."

"Well, dear, we'll go to Cheddar. My! how pleased Lenny will be!"

The child looked up with a bright smile, then resumed his play.

"Dear heart," said Mrs. Bailey, "why do you choose Cheddar of all places? Is it because you first saw Mr. Maxwell there?"

A faint flush stole into the colourless cheeks.

"Yes," she answered, gently.

"I wish you would forget him, and think of that noble Mr. Rossvell."

"Oh, nurse! As if I could burden him or any man with my shame!" Leonie cried. "No, I will live always alone; it will not be for long."

She was suffering with heart affection, the doctor said, and must not have any mental worry. Oh, what a mockery it seemed to the girl—no mental worry! She knew herself the end was near, and but for Lenny would have been glad.

So they went to Cheddar, and for a few days Leonie was decidedly better. Then she began to droop, and Mrs. Bailey took the liberty to write to Aylmer begging him to go down, as she was very anxious about her young lady.

He instantly complied, and, reaching the quiet cottage where they had taken lodgings, was shown into the little sitting-room. Mrs. Bailey was sitting there, with Lenny on her knee. She greeted him warmly. He took the boy from her, and, after looking intently into his face, kissed him. Then he said,—

"Where is she?" and looked round the room.

"She was better this morning, and thought she would go up the cliffs."

"I will follow her. Is it judicious for her to do much climbing?"

"I'm afraid not, sir; but she seemed so to have set her mind upon it that I could not say her nay. You'll overtake her very easily."

He went out, and up the hill side. There was a strange presentiment of ill upon him, which, strive as he would, he could not shake off. He walked as swiftly as he could along the rocky, thymy way, rustling through the heather, and crushing the harebells ruthlessly. And when he had almost reached the spot where, last year, he had found Leonie he saw her lying there, in almost the same attitude, and his heart stood still with fear.

Hardly breathing, he moved towards her, and kneeling down, tried to possess himself of one hand. It was clenched and cold. He spoke her name.

"Leonie, my darling, I have come to make you happy if you will let me."

No answer. Surely she must have fainted. He laid his hand upon her breast, then threw

himself down beside her in a paroxysm of anguish, for she was dead!

There was no inquest. The doctor who had attended Leonie gave evidence as to the affection of the heart from which she suffered, but Aylmer set his teeth to suppress the groan which rose to his lips, for he knew she had been done to death by the two men who, each in his turn, had professed to love her.

Theodore was terribly shocked when he first heard the news, but when the early horror had passed away he acknowledged to himself that it was best for him and for her that she should die. And being a man, in time he put her memory away from him, and returned to his old allegiance. Within a year of Leonie's death he married Irena Rossvell.

Fergus Darrell yet lives a discontented, disappointed libertine; and twice a year Aylmer Rossvell goes down to Cheddar, taking with him the bonny boy he has adopted, and for whose mother's sake he will live lonely all his life.

Lenny knows nothing yet of that sad story; he only knows that Uncle Aylmer had loved her first and last, and that all his life's love was laid low in the hour he found her cold and still "on a hill side."

[THE END.]

## FACETIÆ.

ARE cross-bars and raven looks of the same family?

MATRIMONIAL history is a narrative of many words; but the story of love may be told in a few letters.

A BABY comes to us on angel's wings, but it hangs the wings up in a dark closet when it's feet have once touched the earth.

A FRENCH barber's signboard reads thus:—"To-morrow the public will be shaved gratuitously." Of course it's always to-morrow.

THEY were in a wood gathering ferns for a book. Said he, looking things unutterable: "I wish I was a fern, Gussie." "Why?" she asked. "Why—p'raps you might—press me, too."

PRETTY TEACHER: "Now, Johnny Wells, can you tell me what is meant by a miracle?" Johnny: "Yes, teacher. Mother says if you don't marry the new parson 'twill be a miracle."

"How is Jim Bullard getting on?" asked a stranger at the railroad-station of a country town. "Jim kermitted suicide 'bout a month ago," replied a native. "How did he commit suicide?" "Why he went and got married."

THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE.—Doctor: "You must take more exercise; what is your business?" Patient: "I am a bricklayer by trade." Doctor: "Then you ought to get plenty of exercise." Patient: "That depends. You see sometimes we work by the piece and sometimes by the day."

YOUNG WIFE to Husband: "Don't you notice a difference in the milk, dear?" Young Husband: "Yes; this is much better than we have been getting." Young Wife: "Very much better. I get it of a new man. He said he would guarantee it to be perfectly pure, and so I bought enough to last for a week."

AN old Scotch lady being in London, observed above a carrier's shop door a cow's tail fixed to the wall by way of a sign. She stood for a considerable time meditating on the curious sign. The shopman went out and politely asked her what it was that drew her notice so much, upon which she answered—"Oh, I've stood an lookit near an oor at that cow's tail, and I canna see, I the name o' wonder, hoo the cow cud gang in at sic a sma' hole and no be able to pu' in her tail after her."

"No," said a druggist, "it is not all profit in selling a glass of soda-water. You see, the wear and tear on the glass amounts to something."

"Six feet in his boots!" exclaimed old Mrs. Beeswax; "nonsense! Why, they might as well tell me that the man has six heads in his hat!"

JONES, who had just come from Florence, being asked whether he was not in raptures with the Venus de Medici, replied, "Well, to tell the truth, I don't care about those stone gals."

A COMPOSITOR with a great prophetic soul, while putting into type a wedding, instead of the "contracting parties" made it read "the contradicting parties."

"Oh, George, I'm ashamed of you rubbing your lips like that after that dear little girl has given you so sweet a kiss!" "I'm not rubbing it off, nurse. I'm rubbing it in."

A NAME TO BE REMEMBERED.—A: "So, our friend is engaged to be married; pray, who is the lady of his choice?" B: "10,000 pounds—I forget the other name."

BOBBY'S EXPLANATION.—Mamma, dining out: "It isn't polite, Bobby, to smack your lips when eating. You never do that at home."

"Cause we never have anything worth smacking over!"

THEY had been married six weeks, and she said: "Now don't go away out late, but come home soon to see 'little wifey, tifey!'" They had been married six years, and she said: "If you go out to-night, Smith, I'm going to look up the house and go over and sleep at mother's."

SCENE: Crystal Palace. Yankee visitor (addressing a policeman on duty): "I calculate, stranger, that if they keep you much longer under this glass roof you'll be in a fair way of sprouting." Bobby (despondingly): "No fear of that, guv'nor; they don't keep me moist enough."

IN summing up a case, a well-known counsel was so severe on the opposing lawyer that the latter jumped up and exclaimed:—"I'd like to know if the counsel thinks I'm a fool!" His opponent reflected a moment, and then quietly said: "My friend wants to know if I think he is a fool. In response to that interrogatory, I can only say that I am not prepared to deny it."

WELL-MATCHED in politeness and readiness was a gentleman whose button caught hold of the fringe on a lady's shawl. "I'm attached to you," said the gentleman, laughing, while he was industriously trying to get loose. "The attachment is mutual," was the good-natured reply.

"ANNIE, is it proper to say this 'ere or that 'ere?" "Why, Kate, of course not." "Well, I don't know whether it is proper or not, but I feel cold in this ear from that air."

JOHNNY: "What is the matter, ma?" Mrs. Clack: "That's what I'd like to know, Johnny. I've tried, and tried to get that old Spanish hen to set, but she won't do it, but stands up when I tie her in the nest." Johnny: "Well, ma, p'raps she's got a boil."

"You love me no longer," said a bride of a few months to her better half, in his gown and slippers. "Why do you say that, Puss?" he asked. "You do not caress me nor call me pet names; you no longer seek so earnestly for my company," was the tearful answer. "My dear," continued the aggravating wretch, "did you ever notice a man running after a bus? How he does run over stones, through mud, regardless of everything, till he reaches the bus; then seizes hold and swings on. Then he quietly seats himself and reads the paper. The bus is as important to a man after he gets in as when he was chasing it, but the manifestation is no longer called for. I would have shot anyone who put himself in my way when in pursuit of you, as I would now shoot anyone who would come between us; but as a proof of my love you insist upon my running after the bus."



## SOCIETY.

THE QUEEN will open the new bridge across the Dee at Ballater in the first week in November.

THE PRINCE OF WALES will, it is stated, in future race in his own name. Lord Randolph Churchill is another new member of the turf. Though he has not been known as a sportsman, his lordship was master of a pack of harriers at Blenheim until his visit to India made it necessary for a successor to be appointed.

SUB-LIEUTENANT PRINCE GEORGE OF WALES, K.G., has been promoted to the rank of lieutenant in Her Majesty's fleet.

SIR THOMAS AND LADY BRASSET will celebrate their silver wedding by a ball on a grand scale and other festivities, which are to take place shortly at Normanhurst Castle.

THE CROWN PRINCE OF GERMANY completed his fifty-fourth year on October 18th, on which day a celebration took place at Potsdam, the Crown Prince and Princess, with their family, having returned from Switzerland and Italy the previous day.

A SUITE of apartments in the south turret between the Victoria and York Towers, at Windsor Castle, and several adjacent rooms overlooking the Long Walk, have been prepared as a residence for Prince and Princess Henry of Battenberg, on their return from Scotland next month. Their Royal Highnesses' apartments are near those occupied by the Queen.

THE PRINCE OF WALES, on behalf of Her Majesty, has presented to the Princess Marie of Orleans, as a marriage gift, an artistic medallion in diamonds containing a lock of the Prince Consort's hair.

Among other presents to the bride and bridegroom are silver candelabras from the Prince de Joinville, and a bronze statue of Henry IV. by the Duc de Penthièvre. One of the Duc and Duchesse de Chartres' presents to their daughter is a priceless parure of rubies and diamonds; a sapphire and diamond necklace comes from the Duc d'Anjou.

As everyone knows, a French bride has the happiness of having three wedding gowns—one for the civil marriage, one for the signing of the contract, and one for the religious ceremony.

On the first occasion Princess Marie wore a skirt of blue plush in a shade called Baltic blue, rather paler than peacock, but with similar suggestions of green, like a shoaling sea. Over this skirt opened a tunic of ribbed silk in the same shade of blue with the plush. The bodice was also made of this silk, but it was partly covered by a Figaro vest of Baltic blue plush, which scarcely reached to the waist, and was trimmed with fine passementerie in the same shade of blue as the plush.

A small capote of gathered plush completed the costume. It was lined with golden brown velvet, and tied on with narrow strings of golden brown velvet ribbon.

The travelling dress is of a cloth in a beautiful shade of grey, known to modistes as "old silver." The skirt is arranged in pleats which fall in straight and simple folds. The drapery of the tunic is formed by pleats which cross and recross each other. The cassaque bodice is trimmed hussar-fashion with raised knots of old silver passementerie.

The wedding dress of Miss Holland, on the occasion of her wedding with Mr. R. Abel Smith, was of rich white satin made simply, the front of the skirt and bodice being covered with Brussels lace. She wore a lace veil to correspond and a wreath of orange blossoms, the veil being attached to the hair by diamond marguerites.

The six bridesmaids wore dresses of cream Valenciennes lace over cream surah, looped up with broad sashes of the same hue, bonnets of lace, and velvet *en suite*. Each wore a gold bracelet, with the monogram of the bride and bridegroom in pearls and pink coral, the bridegroom's gift.

## STATISTICS.

THE WEALTHIEST FRIENDLY SOCIETY IN THE WORLD.—The enormous wealth accumulated by the Manchester Unity of Odd Fellows is shown in the financial statement of the Order for the year ending December 31, 1884. Including the subsidiary funds, amounting to £301,788 12s. 8d., the total accumulated capital of the Order at the above date was £5,732,798 19s. 6d., of which £5,569,350 belonged to the sick and funeral, and £163,448 to district funeral funds. These figures show an increase for the past year of £213,200, and yield an average of £9 15s. 11½d. per member, which makes the body the wealthiest friendly society in the world. The annual income last year was £840,526, of which the sum of £619,378 9s. 10d. was from members' contributions, £211,112 15s. 9d. from interest, and £10,035 from initiation fees. On the other hand, the payments only amounted to £585,714 14s. 1d., of which £467,867 was for sick benefits to members, and £117,847 for funeral payments on the death of members. Accordingly, there was a surplus of £254,811 to be added to the accumulated capital. The above returns relate to 4,284 lodges, with 533,850 members; but there are in addition 8,721 members belonging to home and colonial lodges from whom the necessary returns have not been received.

## GEMS.

He who cheats the man that confides in him, in a witty manner, makes us laugh at his jest, and half disarm our anger; but reflection soon insures him our contempt and indignation.

CARRY yourself respectfully towards your superiors, friendly towards your equals, condescendingly towards your inferiors, generously towards your enemies, and lovingly towards all.

We should not sadden the harmless mirth of others by suffering our own melancholy to be seen; and this species of exertion is, like virtue, its own reward; for the good spirits which are at first simulated become at length real.

THOUGH sometimes small evils, like invisible insects, inflict pain, and a single hair may stop a fast machine, yet the chief secret of comfort lies in not allowing trifles to vex one, and in prudently cultivating an undergrowth of small pleasures, since very few great ones (alas!) are let on long leases!

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

LEMON PUDDING.—Grate the rind of a lemon; mix with the yolk of two eggs one pint fine bread crumb, one quart sweet milk, half cup sugar, pinch of salt. Bake twenty minutes. Beat to a froth white of the eggs, juice of the lemon and half cup of sugar. Spread over top of pudding and bake five minutes.

BREAD SAUCE.—Boil half pint of milk and put it into a teacupful of bread crumbs, a little powdered, small chopped onion which has been boiled in three waters, and let it simmer twenty minutes, then add a bit of fresh butter rolled in flour; just boil up, and serve.

OYSTER SAUCE.—Beard the oysters (the number must depend on the quantity required), strain their liquor and let it stand for any sediment to fall, then pour it off clear into a saucepan, and add one blade of mace and two or three white peppercorns; let it boil for a few minutes, then throw in the oysters to let them just boil up; take them out and strain the liquor; boil the oysters and liquor again, adding some butter which has been rubbed in flour (on a trencher) and a little cream or milk.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

THE first of all virtues is innocence; the next is modesty. If we banish modesty out of the world, she carries away with her half the virtue that is in it.

TACT is the life of the five senses. It is the open eye, the quick ear, the judging taste, the keen smell, and the lively touch. Talent is power, tact is skill; talent is weight, tact momentum; talent knows what to do, tact how to do it; talent is wealth, tact is ready money.

A CYNIC likens society to a long series of uprising ridges which from the first to the last offer no valley of repose; wherever you take your stand, you are looked down upon by those above you, and reviled and pelted by those below you. Every creature you see is a farthing Sisyphus, pushing his little stone up some Lilliputian mole-hill. This is our world.

PERHAPS the summary of good breeding may be reduced to this rule: "Behave unto all men as you would they should behave unto you." This will most certainly oblige us to treat all mankind with the utmost kindness, civility and respect, there being nothing that we desire more than to be treated so by them.

THE more freely sympathy and affection are extended, and the more gladly they are welcomed, the more they bless mankind. Their very life depends upon a generous atmosphere of both giving and taking. Coldness, reserve, suspicion, pride, kill them as the biting frost kills the tender plant.

THERE is no greater danger and there is no greater evil in home life than the all-too-general habit of giving way to passing moods of ill temper. Families feel that they are too closely united to part for small differences, hence they allow small discords to grow into large ones. This is a sad mistake; the need of home courtesy, home politeness, home restraint, is one which presses everywhere and always alike.

ANIMAL INSTINCT.—A couple of anecdotes of animal instinct are so good that we are tempted to borrow them. The first is of a dog. "At one time when shooting in Yorkshire, the gentleman in the adjoining 'box' had a young female retriever which required to be tied during the drive. Somehow or other she had got loose, and, coming in the direction of our 'box,' picked up one of our birds and made off with it. Our retriever, determined not to stand such injustice, gave chase after her, growling and barking all the way. He caught her before getting up to her master, and subjected her to somewhat rough treatment as a punishment for her thieving propensities. He then picked up the bird and returned to his own 'box.'" This dog clearly felt that the bird was the lawful prey of his master, and, declining to accept the other retriever's proceeding as the result of ignorance, put it down as deliberate petty larceny. The other story is of a bird of prey, the smallest of English birds that comes within that category. "Remarkable illustrations of the cunning displayed by the merlin are frequently recorded. We learn from a paragraph which appeared in an Edinburgh newspaper that an engine driver had for several years witnessed the tactics of one of these birds which frequently attended him on his journeys. It usually followed the train, sometimes partly hidden by the smoke, watching for the small birds which the train frightened as it passed. While the birds were thinking more of the 'iron horse' than anything else, it made its swoop at them with incredible speed, and if it missed, returned again to continue its flight in the wake of the carriages. Though the engine might have a start of one hundred and fifty to two hundred yards, it came up to it in a second or two, watching the rising of a bird from one of the hedges bordering the line."

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**LITTLE DOT.**—The colour is light brown.

**J. D. CYMMER.**—Not that we are aware of. He has always been a Liberal.

**KATE P.**—1. Yes, with a little practice. 2. Reddish brown.

**P. F. W.**—Copyright is the right to reproduce copies of the original manuscript.

**C. C. G.**—An apprentice can quit his employment at the age of twenty-one.

**M. F. W.**—Where was your common sense? With such a person contradiction only meant strengthening her in her own obstinate opinion.

**W. H. R.**—Leave all such matters alone, and attend to your own business.

**A VIOLIN.**—"Alto" is German, meaning "a princess." The hair is a beautiful shade of nut brown.

**L. E. A.**—The word programme is pronounced program, the emphasis being upon the first syllable.

**S. R. G.**—The projections at the corners and between windows are termed buttresses, and the mouldings which divide them into stages are called set-offs.

**E. W.**—For invisible writing, which will only appear on being held to the fire, try simple milk, or the juice of onions.

**C. M.**—Avoid Parisian enamel as a poison. Should one be determined to use it you will find it costly in the extreme.

**M. E. S.**—Seek a situation without delay. Your remaining with the children will do them but little good and yourself much harm.

**C. F.**—We cannot pass judgment upon "a piece of clay" without pursuing the lines; send them and we will give an opinion.

**LITA.**—It is not proper to say "bad grammar," nor is it proper to say "bad English." Handwriting would be better without so many flourishes.

**BOY READER.**—Black spots and pimples in the skin are very common with young people; rub well after washing and be generously taking plenty of exercise, and you will speedily outgrow them.

**N. N. A.**—An acknowledgment by a man of a woman as his wife made twelve years ago in Scotland before witnesses constitutes a valid marriage.

**N. L.**—Why wish to make a scent from the pure oil of roses? It is the best scent known. Use a drop or two in oil or pomatum for the hair, or in a drawer for linen.

**B. H. R.**—To transfer prints from paper to glass, soak the prints in mastic varnish, place them on the glass, and when dried rub off the paper with a wet finger.

**J. H. W.**—The term movement in clock or watch-making is applied only to the wheel-work.

**T. F. W.**—The best way for clearing the voice is to take one or two fresh-laid eggs, only just set.

**C. R. S.**—Emir is an Eastern term bestowed upon the real or supposed descendants of Mahomet and his daughter Fatima.

**A. D. O.**—Why desire to "cure a red complexion?" It is a sign of health in a young woman, without indeed it arises from indigestion, in which case you should at once consult a medical man.

**K. T. M.**—To obtain the situation of a stewardess you should apply, giving testimonials as to character and qualifications, to any firm of shipowners. The mere fact, however, of your being a dressmaker we do not think would help you.

**C. W.**—You are perfectly correct. Should the Prince of Wales die before he became king his eldest son, Prince Albert Victor of Wales, would be heir to the throne. The second son of H.R.H. is Prince George of Wales.

**E. V. W.**—The idea of a debating society for children under twelve years of age is absurd, for when a boy or girl has gone through their usual studies and lessons for the day they require some outdoor play and exercise.

**LENA.**—A good ointment for chilblains may be made by taking two drachms of clove oil and camphor, eight drachms of spermaceti ointment, four drachms of oil of turpentine; mix well together. Apply by gentle friction two or three times daily.

**L. P. D.**—The oldest wooden coffin of which we have any record is that of King Arthur. Stone coffins were used by the Anglo-Saxons as early as the year 695, and were not quite obsolete before the reign of Henry VIII.

**S. P. H.**—Despondency is the worst of all evils, it is the abandonment of good; the giving up the battle of life for a meaningless existence. He who can infuse courage into the mind is the best physician.

**F. N. W.**—The sting of a wasp may be remedied by pressing the barrel of a watch-key over the spot, so as to expose the sting, which must be removed; then apply a little hartsorn, which will give immediate relief.

**T. C.**—1. To obtain a copy of the engraving of the "Trial of Edie Deans" you should apply to a printseller or publisher. 2. The price would depend upon the date of the copy, or the quality in the market.

**DEARER READER.**—We never publish such advertisements now, and decline to encourage them, as they seem likely to lead to harm.

**S. C. M.**—The river near Winchester is called the Itchen. There is a river Nile in Egypt—the sacred Nile.

**ROSE.**—To make stone blue take finely powdered indigo and starch, make into a paste with warm water, and then form the mass into small lumps or cakes.

**V. G. W.**—The best way to clean French kid gloves is to put them on your hands and wash them, as if you were washing your hands, in some spirits of turpentine; then hang them in a warm place.

**J. H.**—You should apply to the person who gave you your present appointment, to your immediate chief, who would advise you, or, better still, to a member of Parliament, who might advance your interest in the direction you desire.

**L. P. R.**—Mittimus is a law term, and means a precept or command in writing addressed by competent judicial authority to a jailer or keeper of a prison to receive into custody and safely keep the person charged with any offence against the laws.

**S. F. W.**—To make a good mahogany stain boil half pound of madder and two ounces of logwood chips in a gallon of water, and rub the articles to be stained with it while hot; when quite dry rub the material with a solution of pearlsh, two drachms to a quart.

## "I'M BOUND TO LEAD."

"I'm bound to lead!" cries the eager lad,  
As he gathers his mates around him,  
And wears with pride a sword at his side,  
And the honours with which they've crowned him,  
They pledge themselves his word to obey,  
And say, as their pride they swallow:  
"The only right he should lead in the fight,  
And we are the ones to follow."

"I'm bound to lead!" says the lordly man,  
With pompous parade and bluster,  
"And I'll form in line, at a word of mine,  
As many as I can muster.  
I may not take as high a rank  
As Napoleon or Alexander,  
But I'll win some fame, and acquire the name  
Of being a good commander."

On land or sea, whatever their craft—  
Poets, preachers or pleaders—  
Throughout Christendom there are always some  
Who are surely born to be leaders.  
If we watch the tramp of the lowly herd,  
Or the flight of the soaring swallow,  
Lo and behold! there's a chiefain bold  
Who leads, and the rest must follow.

Some push themselves to the front, alas!  
By the power of an evil spirit;  
While the others will take high rank and make  
Their mark on the score of merit.  
And whether they lead to heights above,  
Or to depths, as dark and hollow,  
They will always find a host inclined  
Their leadership to follow.

And I say to those who are at the rear  
With the rest of the meek and the lowly,  
They are much to blame if they swell the fame  
Of a captain or cause unholy.  
Some are born to lead; but 'tis yours to choose  
'Twixt Apollon or Apollo,  
And the man you can trust, and whose cause is just,  
Is the one that you ought to follow.

J. F.

**ANXIOUS MOTHER.**—Your daughter seems to be suffering from a complication of disorders. "Bright's disease" is a serious form of kidney trouble. The other refers entirely to the heart. Perhaps it would be best to take her to a hospital, or to seek other advice.

**HYACINTH HARCOURT.**—1. No. 2. Not unless the marriage was performed by banns, and no objection was lodged. 3. Most injurious. 4. Yes, very well. 5. No; we are always happy to oblige our correspondents free of charge.

**ROSE W. (York).**—1. Put all your waste-paper in a bag, and any paper-maker will be glad to take it of you at a price. 2. Good writing and composition. Thanks for good opinion. We try to deserve success if we can't command it.

**T. R. P.**—The "intended husband" is the proper person to give the deciding word as to that matter. If he objects to such treatment of his betrothed, that should decide the matter in the negative. As a general rule, young ladies cannot be too careful with regard to such things. It is better for a girl to be prudish than too free in her manners.

**A. D. W.**—When a portrait lens is employed for copying any object care should be taken that the size of the original be not exceeded. If it be necessary to enlarge the object copied the lens should be reversed, so as to present the front lens to the ground glass. A good copying lens may be extemporised by removing the back lens of the portrait combination, and inserting in its place another front. A combination of this kind requires a small stop, but when the size of the copy approaches that of the original it forms a copy of great brilliancy.

**C. M. T.**—It is no good to attempt to prevent your hair turning gray. The cause is constitutional. The frequent use of hair grease, or any good pomade, will, however, darken it; all dyes are injurious.

**A. C.**—There is no remedy for yellowness of the skin but frequent bathing and attention to the general health, without, indeed, it arises from inaction or disease of the liver, in which case you should consult a medical man.

**S. H. S.**—It is impossible for any but a medical man, acquainted with your constitution, to advise as to the pain in your back. (Your handwriting is ladylike, and the colour of the hair you send us is flaxen.)

**O. L. N.**—In addressing an audience where there is a presiding officer it is customary to salute him first, and the audience next, by saying, "Mr. Chairman, ladies, and gentlemen."

**L. F.**—To dress a breast of veal: First remove the outer skin, put in some forcemeat, fasten the skin over again, lard it well, and baste while roasting; make some light brown gravy, season nicely, and serve with some of the gravy over it.

**R. M. N.**—To keep joints, such as venison, a haunch, saddle, or leg of mutton properly warm in cold weather. Have a hot-water cask filled with hot water, frequently replenishing it, if to be kept some time, and it will be quite as good as if dished immediately.

**LINA.**—Endeavour not to nourish the feelings of an unrequited love. "Who can control the latent force of the heart?" says the poet, and it may be added, Who can put fetters on yearnings that have their origin in a natural craving for affection? Philosophy can accomplish much, however.

**M. C. R.**—The lady should how first. It is her privilege first to recognise a friend of the opposite sex. It is not necessary to dismiss an admirer altogether unless his company is distasteful. There is no impropriety in accepting a friend's escort to a picnic. You write very nicely, but should strive to improve.

**W. C. W.**—Colbert soup is a most excellent and wholesome one; the foundation is some good brown thick gravy, then flavoured with blanched chervil, butter, cream, and the yolks of eggs; some poached eggs served up with it make a good addition.

**W. W. R.**—You ask whence the saying "The horns of a dilemma" originated. Dilemma is a pure Greek word; Lemma means anything taken for granted, from the verb Lambano (to take). Di-lemma is a double lemma, a two-edged sword which strikes either way.

**W. G. H.**—The "Marseillaise Hymn," which is the favourite French national song, can be obtained in English at almost any music shop. So can *Parlant pour la Syrie*—"Departing for Syria"—which was written by Hortense de Beauharnais, the Empress Josephine's daughter.

**R. L.**—Being master of the English, German, French, and Russian languages, and without your handwriting being so good, you should not find much difficulty in obtaining a situation as clerk, book-keeper, or correspondent in a merchant's office. If you can afford it you should continue to advertise in the *Times*. 2. There are respectable agents who obtain situations for persons in want of employment, and who themselves advertise in the daily press.

**ELLA B.**—The young man probably has not the means to marry and support a wife and family, and therefore does not permit himself to declare his love. It is unwise for a young lady to give her heart to one until she is certain that he has a serious intention of marriage. We fear that you are wasting your affection, and would advise you to divert your mind and entertain other company.

**S. T. M.**—We do not think very highly of this young man. His proposition to marry you privately is cowardly and wicked. If he has any malice he will declare his love for you and engage himself to you with the knowledge and consent of your father. Tell him all this in a kind and serious manner, and he may awaken to the right feeling.

**M. R. N.**—Manners are of more importance than laws, for upon them, in a great measure, the law depends. The law affects us but now and then; manners vex or soothe, corrupt or purify, exalt or debase, barbarise or refine us, by a constant, unobtrusive operation, like that of the air we breathe. They impart the whole form and colour to our lives, and according to their quality, they aid morally or actually to ruin them.

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